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GOOD SOCIETY

VOL. II.

GOOD SOCIETY;

OR,

CONTRASTS OF CHARACTER.

BY

MRS. GREY,

AUTHOR OF

"THE GAMBLER'S WIFE,"
"PASSAGES IN THE LIFE OF A FAST YOUNG LADY,"
&c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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GOOD SOCIETY;

OR,

CONTRASTS OF CHARACTER.

CHAPTER I.

A DELICATE MISSION.

A CARRIAGE stopped at the front entrance of Mount-Trevor Court, having come along the gravel-road from the South Lodge. It was a hired vehicle, perhaps from the county town, drawn by a pair of posters, whose steaming flanks gave evidence of having been driven a long distance, at a brisk pace. A footman in livery came from the house and presented himself at the carriage-window. After a short colloquy between him and a gentleman within the vehicle, the door was opened, the

latter sprang out, put something into the post-boy's hand, and walked leisurely up the hall steps, as the servant still more leisurely followed, bearing a small portmanteau. The post-boy looked at what he had received, without testifying anything like emotion, turned his horses round, and walked them back the road they had come.

"My lady said, sir, that as soon as you had refreshed yourself after your journey, I was to conduct you to her apartment."

"Very well, James. Come for me in about ten minutes."

The visitor now found himself in a very pleasant bed-room, and lost no time in availing himself of its welcome accommodations. He enjoyed a thorough lavation, brought his fine head of hair into a more presentable shape, and brushed off the dust from his black cloth suit—a suit of clerical cut, to which he now added a spotless cravat; a clean pocket-handkerchief was also taken from the portmanteau; and that useful travelling companion having been closed and restrapped, the owner threw himself into a chair to await his promised summons to the lady of the house.

He had not to wait long. A knock at the door presently caused him to leave his seat, and the next minute he was following the footman through a corridor, and down a flight of richly-carpeted stairs, into a suite of noble rooms, at the end of which he found his hostess, in a very rich dress, reclining among a pile of cushions on an ottoman placed at a little distance from a bright fire, from the glare of which her complexion was protected by a silk curtain. She possessed remarkably handsome features of a classical type, but they were more regular than expressive. Her figure was above the ordinary height, which gave additional dignity to her appearance. She was no longer young, but her face displayed no indication of age. She was a matron of the Upper Ten Thousand, but wore so tranquil an aspect, that no one could imagine any deep feeling had ever influenced her womanhood since its earliest development.

She appeared to have been reading, but whether the book she had selected was a volume of sermons, a collection of poems, a portion of a novel, or a division of history, it was not easy to say, for it was hastily closed

upon the embroidered marker, and pushed under a cushion as the reverend gentleman was ushered into the room.

"The Reverend Mr. Mordecate! I am very glad to see you," said the lady, languidly holding out her hand as she recognized her visitor. He had not altered in the slightest degree since the reader saw him last. He was quite as handsome, quite as spiritual, quite as fashionable as when Miss Lætitia Fairholme made such a desperate attack upon his principles and his faith.

Her assault did not appear to have done him any harm. Indeed his countenance was one that seemed superior to all earthly evils. No attack was likely to be made upon him by his present companion, who was of a very different order of woman to the plain, fearless, strong-minded sister of his Oxford pupil.

"I have obeyed your ladyship's summons," said the Reverend Emanuel, as he took the proffered hand with a visible reverence in the expression of his courtesy. "I need not say, I hope, with what gratification. Where great interests are at stake there must ever be more than ordinary satisfaction in any faithful

servant of our only true and apostolic Church, hurrying to do her behests; and this case is one of special importance. The Holy Father, the acknowledged Vicar of Christ on earth, has stated that he puts up fervent prayers night and day for his very dear and much-respected daughter, and his Eminence the Cardinal, has assured me that of all the English nobility there is no one in whose spiritual welfare he feels so profound a concern."

"Take a seat, Mr. Mordecate," was said in a low sweet voice, the beautiful face remaining as impassive as if carved of Parian marble.

The reverend gentleman seated himself on a chair near the couch. He gazed on the patrician matron with quite as much respect as if he felt obliged to look upon her as, at least, a saint in *moiré antique*.

"His Holiness is well, I hope?" she inquired.

"Alas, my lady," replied her visitor, while an expression of touching pathos appeared in his fine face, "the Holy Father is burthened with many and heavy troubles. It is not merely his responsibilities as head of the Catholic Church that affect him,—these the affectionate

solicitude of the Blessed Virgin, whose immaculate conception he established, enable him to bear lightly. The source of His Holiness's suffering lies in another direction,—the ambition of ill-regulated minds that threaten to deprive the Holy See of its patrimonial possessions, the state of Italy, and more especially that of the Pontifical Possessions,—affect the Holy Father most painfully."

"The Cardinal is well, I hope?"

"The health of his Eminence, thanks to the gracious protection vouchsafed to him from on high, is tolerably good. But the Cardinal has also many troubles, inseparable from the exalted position his Eminence holds as a Prince of the Church, in an heretical land. It is impossible to imagine the extent of the Cardinal's labours or the depth of his anxiety for the wandering sheep he is constantly endeavouring to bring into the only safe fold.

"Ah! Lady Mount-Trevor," he added, in a pleasing voice, as his clear, bright eyes flashed upon her a look of supreme interest, "if you were aware of the earnestness of feeling with which his Eminence recommended your lady-

ship to my care, when I parted from him yesterday, after a most touching prayer on your behalf, your amiable nature would yearn for a closer communion with so noble, so pious a disposition."

"Did the Cardinal say anything about me, to you?"

"There was nothing to the purpose he left unsaid. 'Father Emanuel,' he began, 'my honoured and trusted brother in Christ, you are going on a great mission. Remember that the attention of the Pontiff and of the entire College of Cardinals, is concentrated on and absorbed in your proceedings. We have set our hearts on gaining this last and proudest triumph. Employ all your eloquence in the cause. The gaining over this distinguished ornament of the English Court is regarded as the grandest of all possible advantages for our Holy Apostolic Church. I will besiege the Blessed Mother with supplications to grant you success, and my benediction rests upon your efforts.'"

The priest paused as if to note the effect of this appeal, but could observe only the unexpressive classical features in the exact state

in which they had met his glance on entering the room.

"The Cardinal is very good," she murmured, and then, as if dismissing the subject from her mind, asked, "Did you have a pleasant journey, Mr. Mordecate?"

"Yes, Lady Mount-Trevor," he replied, at once affecting a more sprightly tone, "my progress was cheered by the prospect of realizing the hopes of my superiors, and I saw everything, not only *couleur de rose*, but steeped in sunshine. An unusual gratification was before me—the society of one of the most accomplished women of her age. I have been lately in retreat, going through a severe course of penance and meditation, and the idea of the social and intellectual pleasures of Mount-Trevor Court, appeared unusually seductive, contrasted with the silence and solitude to which I had submitted."

"Have you been far, Father Emanuel?"

"I have been in retreat with a community of holy men of the severe Order known as 'La Trappe'—a most interesting brotherhood who labour in silence, and the time not occupied in useful work is devoted to prayer. They

live entirely on vegetables and fruit, and in a great measure maintain themselves by their own industry."

"I have heard of them. Are there many Englishmen in the Order?"

"Not many; only two in the house I visited, the celebrated one in Normandy."

"Did not the Trappists originate with some gay man of pleasure?"

"The agents of God are always selected, Lady Mount-Trevor, with profound judgment, in the adaptation of the means to the end. If it be necessary to reform the manners of the dissolute great, the heart of some distinguished libertine is touched by the Divine grace, and he is rendered exemplary to the social circle in which he flourished. The abbey in the valley of La Trappe was originally founded by Monsieur le Comte de Perche about the middle of the twelfth century. The Count was a knight of some distinction in those days of chivalry, and it was then no unusual thing for the most gallant adventurer to take a disgust to the brilliant world of which he had been the ornament, and to retire to spend the re-

mainder of his days in a solitary hermitage or cheerless monastic cell.

"The Count chose to found a new Order of monks, with the severest rules yet known in Christian religious communities; but the brethren did not attract any great amount of attention in France, and their discipline became gradually relaxed till the licentious reign of Louis the Fourteenth, when one of those fashionable churchmen, who figure so largely in the memoirs of the time under the title of *Abbé*, the majority of whom, however, were laymen who were permitted to obtain the revenues of an Abbey, without having taken orders—lost by death a lady to whom he was deeply attached. It was one of those cases of Divine interposition to which I have just referred. The Abbe de Rance was a notorious evil-doer in the most profligate court in Christendom, and he was made to repent of his evil life, and begin a new career for the edification of his depraved associates. He not only reformed himself, he reformed the Trappists, of which he became the superior. Their rules and manner of life were rendered more rigid than ever—silence,

fasting, poverty, and prayer being the more conspicuous features."

"Did the Order maintain its severe character?"

"Till the French Revolution, when, like the other religious bodies in a land then without religion, the members were obliged to fly for their lives. Some of the brethren found refuge in England, and remained under the protection of that admirable Catholic, Mr. Weld, of Lulworth, Dorsetshire. But when the blessings of religion were restored to France, they returned to their monastery, which has ever since flourished in all its native piety, simplicity, and severity of rule."

"Have many men who were conspicuous in the world of fashion, belonged to it?"

"The names the brethren held in the society they have abandoned, are known only to the Superior on their admission. They assume another, and their own rarely transpires; but I have been made aware that two very remarkable men, who figured prominently in English fashionable circles of the last generation, abandoned the gay world, accepted the discipline of La Trappe, and died monks of that Order."

"Who were they?"

"One was Baron Geramb, a man of fashion, celebrated in the exclusive coterie over which presided the Prince of Wales, who was afterwards George the Fourth."

"The other?"

"Was Signor Ambrogetti, a favourite singer at the Italian Opera, in London, who was the contemporary of the equally celebrated Catalani."

The Marchioness had exhibited a faint appearance of interest as these details were related to her; and her visitor, who had been carefully watching her countenance, thought the time had arrived for drawing her towards the real object of their interview.

"In such instances of Divine grace," he added, in a more impressive manner, "it is worthy of notice how much good may be effected by what thoughtless people might consider unworthy instruments. How great then must be the benefit likely to be produced when the instrument selected for such excellent employment is the very best of its kind."

Lady Mount-Trevor put her lace handker-

chief on the lower part of her handsome face, but the purpose was not apparent, though it may have been to conceal a yawn.

"It is impossible to over-estimate the influence of so good an example, Lady Mount-Trevor. If your ladyship were at Rome, the Holy Father would assure you of the magnitude of the benefit to Catholic Christianity your conversion would produce. And it is the more desirable just now, when so many English ladies of rank are in communication with the Cardinal respecting their prospects of admission into our only true and apostolic church."

"Are many ladies desirous of becoming converts, Mr. Mordecate?"

"The list increases daily, particularly in the fashionable districts of town. The fact is, certain of your ladyship's *protégés* in the Anglican heretical Church, whom I need not name, are labouring with remarkable industry to advance the great object of European Catholics—the return of the English people to the pure and holy faith of their ancestors. They instruct zealous young curates to imitate the practices of the Church of Rome as closely

as possible, and, as a natural consequence, the zealous young curates become Roman Catholic Priests; they establish communities of religious women of good family, encouraging them to study to make themselves resemble a Roman Catholic sisterhood; and the experiment perfectly succeeds, when all the sisters abandon their teachers and enter a Roman Catholic nunnery.

"The Holy Father is very much indebted to these disinterested labourers in his vineyard; and when they go to Rome—which I cannot see how eventually they can avoid—I have no doubt they will receive a fair reward for their exertions in his service."

"But who have gone over to Rome lately, or are known to contemplate such a step?"

"I might be culpably betraying a sacred trust, Lady Mount-Trevor, were I to divulge secrets imparted to me in confidence," replied the priest, solemnly.

"O! never mind. It is not of the slightest consequence."

Father Emanuel was of a different opinion.

"But I have permission from the Cardinal to acquaint you with one or two very re-

markable and highly interesting instances of a desire for the truth on the part of ladies holding a high position in the aristocracy of this heretical country."

The Marchioness betrayed a slight appearance of interest.

"In the first place, I must name her Grace the Duchess of Malvern."

"Oh! that has been denied by authority," said Lady Mount-Trevor.

"But it has been re-affirmed by greater authority," added Mr. Mordecate. "Her Grace took her first impressions in the usual way, at the imitation chapel in Belgravia; she has been in Rome since—indeed has visited several Catholic countries, where she had the advantage of seeing the difference between the real worship and the sham. Her Grace has also enjoyed the further advantage of the society of several highly-talented Catholic priests, both abroad and at home. I may add that I had the honour of making her Grace's acquaintance under special recommendations, and am a frequent visitor at her town mansion."

"Has the Duchess declared her intention of leaving the Anglican Church?"

"In many ways, and by many actions. She has left the district in which she must be subjected to the intrusion of a person who calls himself her parish priest, and lives in another where the pretended incumbent is too infirm to trouble her with his visits. She has fitted up a private chapel in her own house, where the service of the Church of Rome is constantly performed by her Grace's chaplain, who is a member of the Society of Jesus."

"Is the Duke aware of this?"

"Perfectly; but there exist at present the most powerful reasons for keeping her Grace's conversion a secret."

"Have any of her family joined her in this proceeding?"

"Yes, more than one. Your ladyship is of course aware that the Countess, her mother, was a rigid Calvinist—at least a bigot of that stamp—and that the Earl, her father, has always maintained the same severe notions. In them she was brought up. When she came to live in a different circle, her religious views adapted themselves easily to a milder form of Protestantism. Out of this she glided into Puseyism, as it is called, and the

cultivation of an æsthetic taste, naturally led her to that fulness of art-worship which so many of our ablest Pontiffs have made a part of the ceremonial of the Romish Church.

"The various branches of her husband's and her own family, have accepted almost as many various forms of heresy, some even adopting the strange errors of that Rabelais among the Baptists whose coarse eloquence has proved so exceedingly popular in the Tabernacle; others showing a leaning for the more monstrous absurdities of another fashionable pulpit attraction, who was equally the town talk in his day, and contrived to establish a sect in which the wealthiest members are invested with an angelic office; indeed, for all I know to the contrary, so strong is the adventurous principle in their religious professions, that the arch-heresy called Mormonism may find acceptation among them.

"The majority are, however, known to be latitudinarians; a large class of professed Protestants, whose faith is for everything in general and nothing in particular, and from these it has not been difficult to attract some

of the more impressive natures to follow the example of their kinswoman.

For instance, there is Lady Allington, who is married to a harmless fop of the Dundreary type. Her conversion is certain, and there is very little doubt that it will be shortly followed by that of other peeresses, who have already shown an inclination for the parent Church, and a desire to repudiate its illegitimate offspring."

There was a pause for a few minutes. The speaker thought it better to let his communication have time to make a strong impression. He kept his somewhat anxious gaze fixed on the beautiful face before him, but if he expected to see there any token of religious conviction, he must have been disappointed. The clear blue eyes looked at him as though they did not see him.

"I shall be writing to the Cardinal by the next post," he observed, "and I hope then to be able to forward to his Eminence the information he, I know, is most anxiously expecting."

Lady Mount-Trevor remained silent and impassive.

"Should there be any point," he continued more earnestly, "on which your ladyship's mind is not made up, I need hardly say how happy I shall be to afford the fullest explanation. The Church has always been an indulgent mother, wherever there was sincerity of purpose and perfect obedience, and I am invested with full powers, by the Holy Father himself, to promise everything which your ladyship's position may render necessary."

Still the classically curved lips were closed, and the deep blue eyes gazed vacantly.

"There need be no publicity," he murmured in a lower voice. "It is not even essential that your ladyship should refrain from your customary attendance at your usual place of worship. Externally things may remain exactly as they are, and no one in the family or in the establishment have any reason to suspect the great inward change that has been so happily effected."

The classically curved lips now slowly separated, and the marble-like features appeared to be impressed with some faint approach to emotion. The skilful negotiator

leant forward eagerly to hear the assent, for which he had so long laboured.

Suddenly the door opened, and a gentleman entered, laughing loudly. He stopped abruptly, after he had advanced a few paces, as he noticed the close juxta-position of the two persons in the room.

"I beg pardon!" he exclaimed, his mirth instantaneously changing to a solemn gravity. "They ought to have told me you were engaged."

"It is of no consequence," said the lady. "It is the Reverend Mr. Mordecate."

The gentleman made a ceremonious bow, smiled a cordial smile, and held out his hand.

"Mr. Mordecate—Lord Mount-Trevor."

The priest had sprung from his seat on the entrance of the intruder, whose bow he returned, and whose hand he accepted.

"Monstrous glad to see you, Mr. Fotheringay," exclaimed his Lordship, with more than his characteristic blandness of manner. "Hope you're come to make a long stay at Mount-Trevor Court. Nice weather, ain't it?"

The reverend gentleman answered that and

other equally important questions that his friendly host—who still retained the sporting suit in which the reader has last seen him—put to him with an appearance of the profoundest interest, in a way that seemed to give the most perfect satisfaction, and they were verging towards more social topics, when Lady Mount-Trevor interposed.

"Perhaps Mr. Mordecate will have the goodness to go into the library, where he will find my youngest son. Clarence is bent upon passing a good examination at Oxford next term. I do not know any one more likely to help him than yourself. Pray do what you can for him, Mr. Mordecate."

Her ladyship's visitor testified the greatest alacrity in obeying her wishes. He had evidently been sent for, for no other purpose than to coach Lord Clarence, but such an idea had never presented itself to him.

"Jesuit!" muttered the Marquis, making a terrible grimace as the clerical visitor closed the door after him. "Sly fox! what on earth has brought the fellow here?"

"Oh! he's a great mathematician, and a famous scholar—one of the best I have been

told, that Oxford has produced. I think he will be useful to Clarence. By the way, what were you in such good spirits about, when you entered?"

"Oh! the drollest thing imaginable!" cried Lord Mount-Trevor, oblivious of the reverend gentleman whom he had so recently discovered *tête-à-tête* with his lady, and his face radiant with good humour. He advanced closer to the couch. "I have been to see Lionel's heiress."

"No! Have you, indeed?"

"Lunched with her!"

"What is she like?"

"Deuced nice girl! Not at all vulgar. Indeed, uncommonly lady-like, and not too much accomplished."

"I'm very glad. Will she have a large fortune?"

"Not the slightest doubt of it. She will inherit all her father possesses, and he's as rich as a Jew."

"What a good thing for Lionel."

"But that father of her's."

"What about him?"

"The most extraordinary animal I ever saw since I was born."

"Isn't he presentable?"

"Presentable? Of course. Not in the least snobbish. A highly respectable man in his way. Mercantile, you know. Head of a great firm, and Mayor of a busy city. You understand the sort of man?"

"Quite."

"But the very drollest fish that ever floundered out of its element."

"Does he make himself very ridiculous?"

"Well, he isn't exactly a fool."

"But if the man is neither a fool nor a snob, I don't see what valid objection we could have to associate with him."

"Associate with him!" echoed his lordship, bursting into a hearty laugh. "I wouldn't lose the chance of that association to be made Prime Minister. Why he's a second Buckstone."

"If he is so amusing as that, I shall be very glad to make his acquaintance. We must invite them, indeed make up a party for them. It will please Lionel. And if his *fiancée* is a really attractive person, such as I can venture to *chaperone*——"

"I tell you that she is everything that the

most fastidious taste could require. Indeed, I think Lionel a very lucky fellow, particularly after his entanglement at Florence, which made you so uneasy, you know."

"Ah! I never could learn how he got out of it; but as he has contrived to free himself without scandal, we are the more bound to assist him in this evidently far more desirable affair."

"With all my heart."

"Then before we go to Baden-Baden, we will give a series of dinner-parties and balls for the enjoyment of the young people. I will do all I can for Miss Drelincourt, and you must do all you can for her father."

"But he's so very droll."

"Oh! eccentric people are to be met with in the best society. I shall tolerate his drolleries, if they are not offensive, for Lionel's sake, and it cannot be more difficult for you than for me."

"You haven't the most remote idea what an extraordinary creature the man is."

"We have had so many ordinary creatures at Mount-Trevor Court, that an extraordinary one will be a welcome change."

Lady Mount-Trevor settled the matter then and there. As usual when she decided on a course she took it, the Marquis contentedly following suit.

CHAPTER II.

A DECLARATION.

Mr. Drelincourt and his daughter were passing a quiet evening in the enjoyment of some excellent music, which their accomplished guest had been singing to them with her usual skill. The heiress had been sitting near her friend at the piano, turning over the leaves for her, imploring for this piece, and suggesting that, in a manner that displayed all a young lady's interest in the performance.

There was a pause in the entertainment when tea was brought in, and then the young ladies discussed the distinguished visitor that had been entertained at luncheon,—Miss Dre-

lincourt with a good deal of animation, for it was evident that the lively Marquis had made a pleasing impression on her, partly perhaps on account of his near relationship to her lover, partly in consequence of his own peculiar qualifications.

The recluse from the Grange did not appear to enjoy the repetition of Lord Mount-Trevor's sallies quite so much as her young hostess had done their perpetration, but listened with her usual attention to the details of his lordship's courteous manners and high-bred affability, which its object poured out with unusual fluency and spirits. But to her reserve her pupil had become so accustomed, that she paid scarcely any attention to her apparent want of sympathy in the immense gratification she had received.

"Poor Miss Mauleverer," she now and then said to herself, when she found her hilarity checked by the gravity of her companion, "she is in more than her usually low spirits to-night. And papa *will* go to sleep. I wish Lionel would return."

Lord Lionel did return, before the tea equipage had been removed, and another

hour was passed in very lively conversation, partly relating to his adventures during the day, and partly to his father's visit. His spirits rose when he found how much Mr. Drelincourt and his daughter had been gratified by their morning visitor, and the invitation he had given them on parting,

While the lovers were in earnest conversation on this agreeable subject, Mr. Drelincourt called to his interesting guest to give him some information he required respecting one of the pieces she had played. She went immediately and sat down near the chair in which he had been indulging in his evening nap.

"That's right!" he cried. "I want to know something which I don't quite understand—about the music you've been so obliging as to play to us once or twice; for you see, as I shall have to go among the big wigs at Mount-Trevor Court, I don't want to appear quite an ignoramus in such matters; not that I should be worse off in this respect than Sir Roger de Coverley, who contrived to do very well without any knowledge of outlandish accomplishments. I'll be bound to

say he never heard of such strange things as songs without words, which that Meddlesome——"

"Mendelssohn, Mr. Drelincourt."

"Yes—Membleson—composed. I dare say they are very charming and clever, and all that; but you see, my dear Miss Mauleverer, they don't satisfy me as a song with words always does. It may be my stupidity, but for the life of me, when I see as well as hear that you are only playing, I can't be persuaded that you're singing as well."

"The music is suggestive of certain ideas which are the unspoken words of the gifted composer."

"O! that's it, is it? Well, to tell you the truth, I would much rather that you opened your mouth and spoke those ideas distinctly. The ways of my youth have made an impression on my mind which no German composer, however gifted he may be, could produce with tunes only. I remember every word of 'On the Banks of Alan Water,' and 'Tom Bowline,' and 'This day a Stag must die,' and a score of others that were equally popular in my young days, long before songs without words

came into fashion. I remember the words, and the words make me remember the tunes; but as for the productions of your gifted German musician, five minutes after I've heard them, they are clean out of my mind. I've nothing to lay hold of them by."

"But cannot you remember dance tunes, Mr. Drelincourt? They have no words."

"Of course they haven't; but they are not songs, and if they suggest anything, its dancing, and not singing. For my part, I'd rather hear 'Polly put the Kettle on,' childish as the ditty may be, than the best of Mr. Mumbleson's pianoforte music."

His guest did not attempt either to correct his pronunciation of her favourite's name, or his estimate of her favourite's compositions. She knew that they were luxuries which required a more refined intellect to appreciate.

"Upon my word, now, Miss Mauleverer, they always give me the idea of a carriage without horses. I don't mean a steam-carriage you know, but any respectable vehicle for the road. And I should always put poets before musicians, just as I should always put horses before carriages. Their ideas set the wheels of

the tune in motion, and carry the listener pleasantly along with it. There are two or three songs with words that I would rather hear than all the songs without words that ever were written."

"What are their titles, Mr. Drelincourt?"

"Well, in the first place, there's 'Wapping Old Stairs.' I'd give any thing to hear that song again. When I was a boy I heard Miss Stephens sing it. It was a treat indeed. I don't know anything that would give me so much real enjoyment as to hear that charming old ballad."

Miss Mauleverer rose from her seat, and went straight to the piano. Unobserved, the lovers had opened one of the French windows and stepped into the conservatory, probably to be more private. They had closed the window after them.

Miss Mauleverer did not take any notice of the music books and portfolios that crowded the Canterbury and what-not. She played a short prelude, and then commenced the homely but touching English ballad that her host had so much desired to hear. She sang it with exquisite expression—indeed so thoroughly

surrendered herself to the sentiment of the song, that she started a little when she found Mr. Drelincourt standing close beside her.

She could not see his face. It was an artist's study, such as Collins or Mulready would have delighted to put on canvas. Nothing could exceed the expression of his delight as the clear rich notes one after another fell upon his ear. He seemed to listen with his soul as well as with his hearing, and the happy memories of a far-off time, when the rich man was an apprentice youth, with his heart untouched by business cares, rose brightly before him. He heard the song out to the end without venturing to utter a word.

"My dear Miss Mauleverer!" he exclaimed, at the conclusion of the last verse, "You have laid me under a great obligation. As you have always sung Italian and German songs, I had no idea that you could sing an English ballad, and in such a masterly way too. Really and honestly, I do not think that Miss Stephens sang it better."

"Have you any other old favourite, Mr. Drelincourt?" she inquired with a faint smile. "That song was taught me by my dear

mother, with many others equally out of date, to which she was quite as partial as you seem to be. If you have another in your memory, pray name it."

"I am very much obliged to you, my dear Miss Mauleverer," cried the old gentleman impressively. "But if you could favour me with 'Black-Eyed Susan.' I remember going to the theatre to hear Incledon sing it. I have heard nothing at the opera which gave me half so much pleasure."

His guest without another word, began "All in the Downs," and her solitary listener immediately became silent and absorbed. If possible, he hung upon this performance with more visible rapture than he had displayed in the preceding. His honest face—a little flushed with excitement and an extra glass or two of very fine old port, in which he had indulged after dinner—was radiant with pleasure. The words were never, in his opinion, better expressed, nor the air more exquisitely sung. Her voice was admirably adapted to give full effect to both, and her success was complete.

The rich man was charmed into forgetful-

ness of the position to which he had elevated himself. He was oblivious of his pretensions to associate with the landed aristocracy of England,—he failed to think of that historical country gentleman whom he was so fond of regarding as his model. He could think only of the special treat he had had more than half a century before in company with that fair-haired girl whose early death had for so long a season taken the sunshine from his thoughts.

"My dear Miss Mauleverer," he cried, seizing her hand immediately she removed it from the keys, "I thank you very much for the excessive pleasure you have afforded me. I cannot find words to express to you my sense of obligation. It is impossible to imagine the gratification I receive from that old song, in the expressive way you sing it. I assure you honestly, Incledon did not afford me half the delight I now experience."

The accomplished vocalist seemed pleased with the effect she produced, and at her enraptured host's suggestion now gave "Sally in our Alley." This was apparently quite as pleasant to hear as either of its predecessors, and seemed equally to recall the joyous memories

of the old man's youth. "Farewell to the Nymph of my Heart!" succeeded; and that was followed by "Auld Robin Gray."

The first impression made on the delighted listener appeared to grow deeper with every performance, and his professions of rapture grew correspondingly more extravagant. When tired of standing he drew a chair close to the piano, and fixed his eyes as intently on the expressive face of the vocalist, as he fixed his hearing on her voice. He seemed to be becoming more and more sensible of the charm of both.

His expressions of rapture became warmer, his compliments more extravagant. He made many ineffectual attempts to explain the extent of his obligations. Every note seemed to go to his heart, and stir up the feelings that had long slumbered in its depths, and he continued to grow more and more excited and to be more and more incoherent.

Whether the old gentleman had taken more wine or more music than was good for him, is an open question, but assuredly he was rapidly verging into a state of excitability that was very likely to lead him into an imprudence

which in his sober senses he could never have meditated.

That Miss Mauleverer was aware of the condition of her companion, did not appear from her conduct, for she took all his eccentric demonstrations as a matter of course, till Mr. Drelincourt suddenly fell down on his knees at her feet in one of the most touching passages of the Scottish ballad.

"Julia!" he cried, with a very flushed face, as he frantically seized the hand nearest him and covered it with kisses.

"Mr. Drelincourt!" exclaimed the young lady, with a look of intense amazement, turning round on the music stool.

"It is of no use struggling any longer with my feelings. I am yours for ever! Only say you'll be my wife."

Miss Mauleverer put her handkerchief to her eyes and appeared to be quite overpowered by this apparently very unexpected appeal to her feelings. Her emotion, however, did not appear to arise from exultation at her good fortune. She sobbed convulsively.

"I have distressed you, cried her kneeling suitor, "by the suddenness of my de-

claration. But say that you will consent, and you shall never have occasion to shed another tear."

"But I can't!" exclaimed the young lady, still sobbing.

"Can't!" repeated Mr. Drelincourt.

"It's impossible!"

"Impossible!" again he repeated, looking a little mystified.

"I've been married these three months!"

"Whew!" cried the old gentleman, making awkward attempts to rise, in which by a spasmodic effort he at last succeeded.

"What a precious fool I have been!" he muttered as soon as he found himself again quietly anchored in his capacious arm-chair. The object of his tender regard retained her seat on the music-stool, and still sobbed.

"Poor thing!" was his unspoken thought, "she has been made the dupe of some low adventurer, and is ashamed to acknowledge the connection. But the secret has been told me in confidence and I must keep it, like an honourable man. Sorry for her, very——"

The sounds of approaching footsteps in the

conservatory, mingled with a musical laugh, made the beautiful recluse at once turn again to the piano, and her companion assume a position as if he were indulging in a nap.

"Has papa had the barbarity to keep you playing to him all this time?" asked the heiress, "while he so ungallantly falls asleep."

"No!" replied her guest, "I have not been playing all the time."

Miss Drelincourt looked in the face of her friend, and could not help observing traces of recent agitation.

"You have exerted yourself too much," she added with increased kindness of manner. "I will not have any more music to-night."

She closed the instrument, and throwing her arm round her friend, drew her away.

"Have you been asleep long, sir?" inquired Lord Lionel, going up to his future father-in-law, as he was rubbing his eyes.

"No, my Lord, I have not slept much!" was the truthful reply.

"I heard Miss Mauleverer singing in a style that ought to have kept you awake, sir."

"I took a few extra glasses of very fine port."

"I see."

But neither his lordship nor his *fiancée* saw anything. They had not the most remote idea of the little sensation drama that had been performed without an audience during their absence.

At this moment a footman came in bearing a couple of letters on a silver salver. Each was sealed with a coat of arms surmounted by a coronet. One was addressed to "John Drelincourt, Esq. of the Hall," and in the left-hand lower corner bore the name "Mount-Trevor;" the other, in a much more feminine style of penmanship, bore only the inscription, "To Miss Drelincourt, &c., &c."

Mr. Drelincourt saddled his double gold eye-glasses on his nose, and deliberately examined first the handwriting and then the seal. The latter he took care not to break, as he tore the envelope from it—not without a considerable flutter of feeling at the honour he felt his noble correspondent had conferred upon him. Presently the paper was spread out, and he read:—

"Mount-Trevor Court.

"My dear Drelincourt,

The retired merchant was delighted. Such a form of address was a most complete recognition of his position among the landed gentry. (He continued—)

"It is with the greatest possible pleasure I pen these few lines to inform you that Lady Mount-Trevor, when I told her how much gratified I was with my reception at the Hall, insisted on my writing you an invitation to join our party here, with your charming daughter, to whom she is now addressing a note. We intend to be very gay, so that the young people shall have plenty of amusement. I hope that you are not disinclined for a little harmless recreation, and that you will permit me the honour of introducing you to the principal county families whom you will meet at Mount-Trevor Court.

"Please to give my compliments to your amiable daughter,

"And believe me to remain,

"My dear Drelincourt,

"Yours very truly,

"Mount-Trevor."

"P.S.—Should you wish to be a Deputy-Lieutenant you will oblige me by letting me arrange it for you."

Mr. Drelincourt read the communication aloud, with a satisfaction he did not attempt to conceal.

"This is exceedingly kind of your father, Lord Lionel. I had no idea that his lordship would be so very good to me. Of course I shall express to him my acknowledgments. As for the distinction his lordship is so amiable as to propose, I have really never ventured to anticipate anything of the kind, but if he sees no objection to my having it, and it is what a country gentleman may fairly lay claim to, of course I shall only be too proud to accept of it."

Lord Lionel, who was himself a little surprised at the communication, merely said a few words as to his father's readiness to advance the honourable ambition of so estimable a neighbour.

"But what have *you* got, Henrietta?" inquired the old gentleman, "for you seem quite as well pleased as myself."

Miss Drelincourt then read her note.

"My dearest Henrietta,

"The fact of my dear son, Lionel, being attached to you, independently of what I have heard from reliable sources as to your numerous qualities of mind and heart, is sufficient to make me anxious that our social relations should become as intimate as possible; therefore I lose no time in assuring you that you will in me find an affectionate mother and a tender friend as long as it shall please Providence to extend my life.

"For your sake, my dear Henrietta, I intend that Mount-Trevor Court shall be gayer than ever it has been. I shall do this with the object of making you known to the county aristocracy. I shall have balls, private theatricals, and every amusement in which you can share. Pray come over with your father to-morrow, that I may arrange everything in perfect consonance with your wishes, and satisfy you how completely I am,

"My dearest Henrietta,

"Yours affectionately,

"A. Mount-Trevor."

"Your mamma is really very kind, Lionel," said the heiress, quite as gratified as her father had been. "I don't know how I can sufficiently show my appreciation of Lady Mount-Trevor's goodness to me."

"I never read a more charming letter," exclaimed Mr. Drelincourt. "The Marchioness must be a most amiable woman."

Lord Lionel seemed as if he felt bound to confirm this opinion.

"Yes," said he, "my mother is exceedingly amiable. I am, of course, very glad that she has expressed herself so kindly disposed towards Henrietta. She is the most proper *chaperone* your daughter could find; and will, I have no doubt, be quite willing to present her at Court next season."

Mr. Drelincourt was enraptured with this new idea, but similar novelties were presented to his mind in rapid succession, as he began to speculate on what ought to be done to recommend himself and daughter to the distinguished company they should have to meet at Mount-Trevor Court. It soon became quite clear that the wardrobes of both must be new furnished, and that the greatest de-

spatch must be employed to procure what was necessary.

Lord Lionel took leave of his kind host and hostess, apparently as much as pleased as either. The former presently became so busy writing to tailors and dress-makers that he quite forgot his other guest, dear as she had been to him less than an hour before. She had unobserved retired to her room, and several days elapsed before he met her again. Her secret was safe in his custody—he had forgotten it.

CHAPTER III.

TAKING BY STORM.

THE rain had fallen almost incessantly during that and the preceding day, and a misty waste was the only prospect now to be gained from the upper windows of the Grange. No carriage or message had arrived from the Hall; there was nothing to disturb the contemplations of its mistress. The sun had made an effort to penetrate the fog, but totally without success.

At last came almost the first sound that had that day broken the stillness—the distant sound of carriage-wheels.

Miss Mauleverer sat up in her couch and listened.

Could the Hall people be sending for her? It was late now to do so, but perhaps the heiress had relented, or guests were wearying for the excitement of her music, or the Squire had insisted—keeping his own secret of course as well as her's—on having her society.

The cloud that had gathered on the brow of Mr. Drelincourt on the receipt of her confession, had not escaped her observation. And oh, vanity of vanities! even with such bitterness at her heart as she then experienced, it had amused rather than distressed her. Now she thought she could not go. Yet, why not? Anything must be better than her own thoughts and the terrors that constantly assailed her when alone. Though she said to herself the carriage must come from the Hall, a presentiment of evil suggested otherwise.

She looked out anxiously. The vehicle was now in sight, slowly crossing the bridge. It was not the Hall carriage, but a mud-bespattered chaise. There was a sharp cry from the solitary watcher, and she started to her feet with a look of fear and horror. Hastily opening the door, she rushed half-way down the stairs and called to her

attendants, whom a knocking at the gate had summoned from the kitchen. Dorcas and Charity seemed equally bewildered when they noticed the excessive agitation in the countenance of their mistress.

"Listen," she said, hurriedly, "if this is any stranger asking for me, do all you can to send him away by denying my existence here. If he insist on making his way into the house by violence, do not let the carriage which has brought him drive away again empty. Tell the driver to wait, I shall want him."

"Do you hear, Dorcas?" she repeated, distinctly. "If the person that carriage has brought here, comes into the house, you are to contrive to detain the vehicle for my use."

"Sure, sure!" answered the elder sister, much alarmed. "But if it's not from the Hall, I'll say you don't see anybody."

"No, no," she whispered, "say I am not here—that you don't know me, or," she added, as if with a sudden thought, "why open at all? why not let the house be supposed empty and deserted?"

Charity looked at her sister as if for an

explanation, but Dorcas had no explanation to offer.

"But the dog, Miss," she cried; "hark how he barks! they'd know it's not a house with nobody in it; and only hear what a clatter they're making. What if it be the Squire's people?"

"No! no!" replied their young lady, decidedly, "I have ascertained that. It is a hired carriage. Do you hear? Be sure you do not open till I tell you."

She sat down upon the stairs, listening intently, the two old servants standing by, at a loss what to do.

Presently Miss Mauleverer rose hastily, and running up into her bed-chamber rapidly collected a few articles of clothing—thrusting them into a small valise, which she fastened, she put on her long cloak, and with her hat in her hand returned to the basement.

She met Dorcas and Charity very much frightened, complaining that the people outside were threatening to break all the windows, and burn down the house, if kept there waiting any longer.

"The postillion says, ma'am," whispered Dorcas, "that there is a gentleman come to see the lady of the house, and that he knows you are here."

"They see the light, too," added Charity, "and the man said, ma'am, he will stay there all night, till we open to him. It's the post-boy from Crowland, who brought you and your poor mamma, Miss."

"Well, well," replied their young mistress, making a desperate effort at decision, "there is, unhappily, no alternative. Open now, if you please. I wish you joy of your visitor, only remember to detain the chaise."

She returned upstairs, and stood within the door of the sitting-room with face white and rigid, teeth set, and eyes dilated. They were bright with an unnatural glare—the fire of womanly hate and scorn.

She also heard the noisy assault of the driver, and had recognized another voice that had been shouted from within the carriage—a voice that made her tremble in every limb.

At one moment she thought of making her escape at once, but rage and hate shortly subdued her fear, and acting under a more

powerful impulse she resolved to face and defy her enemy.

She waited minutes, which seemed hours.

Dorcas, not without evident alarm, had proceeded to open the street door to the stranger. A volley of oaths and abusive epithets greeted her from the incensed driver; and the occupant of the chaise, who, till the last moment, had crept within its shelter, now sprung out. He was attired in a large cloak and slouched travelling-cap, and looked very much like a foreigner; indeed his large whiskers and moustaches and dark complexion might have made better judges of nationality than Dorcas and Charity pronounce him a Frenchman, an Italian, a Spaniard—anything rather than an Englishman. His language, however, soon betrayed the country of his birth.

"You hideous old cats!" he cried, passionately, as he stopped before them. "What do you think you deserve for this infernal conduct, eh? By Jove, I've a great mind to send you to prison."

The postillion threw a carpet-bag into the kitchen.

"Stand out of my way, you catamarans!"

he shouted, as he strode by Charity into the house. "Show me to your lady, or, by Jove, I'll turn you out of the place neck and crop."

Each made a feeble attempt to deny any mistress being in the house.

"I'll see for myself, you horrible old cockatrices!" he cried, as he stalked towards the inner door, and presently began to ascend to the second floor.

CHAPTER IV.

COOL RECEPTION.

THE mistress of the Grange had left the door ajar, and on the intruder pushing it open he beheld her facing him within the threshold.

He started a little, but laughed a self-congratulary yet taunting laugh, then advanced as if to embrace her.

"A fine welcome truly, to this delightful English property of yours, Signora!" he said.

"Bah!" he continued, as she stepped back at his approach with a movement of disgust and indignation, "you must at least have had enough of such an out-of-the-way place, and be ready to start with me for a much plea-

santer habitation. But is there a possibility of existing through one night in it, even in your charming society?"

"I cannot vouch for that," she replied, speaking with suppressed passion, whilst her eyes, with the watchfulness of a wild animal, maintained their fixed gaze upon the door. "As you come uninvited, you must not complain of want of accommodation. My servants will do what they can——"

"Ah! will they!" he cried, with another laugh.

He dashed the poker into the smouldering fuel in the fire-place, to which he advanced, shiveringly.

"You are not going to commit me, I trust, to the tender mercies of those two she-devils I saw below?"

He turned round and glanced with surprise on the cloaked figure that stood before him.

"I was going—*am* going," she answered, with firmness, approaching a step nearer to her visitor, "to fulfil an engagement at a house in the neighbourhood, an intention which your arrival," she added, defiantly, "as

you must naturally suppose, impels me to keep."

"The deuce it does!"

Saying this he sought to take hold of her, but she avoided his grasp.

"Come, *mia bella*, put all this acting aside; it's quite unnecessary, you know, considering how we are situated. You have given me trouble enough, I should think, during the last month, and put me to considerable inconvenience. I have got those awkward things arranged now, which obliged me to leave you; so let's get back to fair Florence as fast as we can."

A look of intense scorn was the only answer he received.

He turned away from it to gaze into the newly aroused fire. It was not pleasant to meet so cold a reception; one, too, in so cheerless a chamber, after a long, wet, and in every way uncomfortable journey.

He threw aside his travelling wraps, and showed a tall figure, having a certain air of fashion in its movements. His physiognomy, too, was not plebeian—but it bore the unmistakable impress of many years of licentious

indulgence. The expression which gleamed as it were out of his still brilliant eyes, was far from prepossessing. His companion shuddered as she beheld it.

"Come," he repeated, conciliatorily, somewhat awed by, and respecting, in spite of himself, this contumelious treatment, "let me beg for something warmer and more invigorating than those blighting looks and scornful accents. Supper and bed, if any thing so comfortable can be obtained here, would be a good deal more acceptable. I fancy I've got a chill from being kept shivering at your inhospitable door. By the way—are those two ancient hags your only servitors?"

"Yes," she replied, changing her tone to one of complacency, "but they will serve your lordship well if you choose to stay here. You have come to the wrong place for luxury; nevertheless, here for a month I have lived—and my mother"—here she eyed him with increased sternness—"died here. But I am wasting my time, and must hasten to fulfil my engagement."

She moved towards the door.

A few hurried strides brought the intruder to her side, and her arm was tightly held within his grasp.

"Good God, madame, you do not seriously suppose that having come all this way to seek a runaway wife, I am going to suffer such nonsense as this—that I meditate for one moment allowing you to leave this house, except in my company. If you choose to start to-night, the carriage is not gone, I believe, and I shall be happy to accompany you. Talk of an engagement! What engagement can you have in such a neighbourhood as this? Lady Vallance, this is too idle a story."

"A true one, nevertheless," she answered, standing quite still, and speaking slowly and distinctly, with a desperate calmness. "There are civilized human beings even in this waste, and a large house, not far distant, where a country gentleman lives, where I sing and play to amuse the company—a resource to which my being made almost penniless, through your means, has reduced me."

"How long will you be absent?" he inquired, insensibly relaxing his hold of her.

"That is uncertain," she replied, keeping

her eyes fixed upon him. "I sometimes stay the night, and walk back early in the morning."

"Then let us leave early in the morning."

"Perhaps—I can keep the carriage?" she asked, with affected submissiveness.

"What carriage?"

"The one you came in. I had intended walking."

Lord Vallance glanced at her with a half-puzzled, half-suspicious expression.

"And so you've turned *cantatrice* to the country bumpkins?" he said, sneeringly. "By Jove, that is a change for Lady Vallance. You're terribly shorn of your beams, too, indeed, in that gloomy dress; but 'beauty unadorned'—excuse the musty compliment."

"I have given up ornaments," she returned, "ever since I cast the last into the waters of Genoa."

As she spoke she lifted to his face her left hand, displaying her third finger, ringless.

"Pshaw!" was the rejoinder, with a careless laugh, as he caught the hand, but she snatched it from him instantly. "That's easily remedied, *cara sposa*."

"You are wrong," she continued, with contemptuous bitterness, unable to resist another cutting thrust at the man she hated. "One decoration I yet retain, and shall carry with me to the grave."

She bared her wrist and disclosed a discoloration. He turned away with an oath, but was evidently discomfited. The next moment he sat down close to the fire.

As though emboldened by the effect she had produced, she advanced nearer to him.

"Can your lordship recall the circumstances under which our relationship was contracted and severed, the humiliation, the treachery, the wrong, the robbery,—I suffered at your hands? I can, if you cannot; and remember, also, that my mother was hurried to her grave through your villainy. Remembering all this can you imagine my being ready to welcome your unexpected arrival, and be willing to spend this night beneath the same roof with you?"

Lord Vallance did not seem disposed to answer.

"Whatever terms," she presently added, "I may feel myself constrained to accede to

on the morrow, I cannot say anything further on the subject now. My servant will tell you where I am going. I shall not be far off."

Lord Vallance did not make any further endeavour to detain his wife, and the expression of his face became painful, either as if weary of the altercation, or suffering from indisposition. He turned round to contemplate the dying embers, suffering her to leave the room. From nervous excitement he let the poker, with which he vainly endeavoured to improve the fire, fall into the grate with a clang that resounded through the house, as Lady Vallance, dragging her valise after her, proceeded downstairs. She called Dorcas and Charity, who were having an animated discussion with the postboy, into the kitchen.

"I am sorry for the trouble I am about to give you," she said to them. "The gentleman upstairs chooses to stay here to-night. There is no help for it, so you must put up with the inconvenience as well as you can. I am going to the Hall. He expects my return in the morning. Here is money in case you are put to any extra expense. Tell him as little as possible about the Hall people."

"But, who is he?" inquired Dorcas, bewilderedly. "And whatever are we to do with a strange gentleman? Is he to be put into your poor mamma's room? And what does he want frightening you out of your own house?"

"He is a wretch!" exclaimed her mistress, fiercely. "But do not be frightened, he will do no harm to either of you. I cannot turn this person out exactly, even if I sent for the constables; he has a certain right to be here, so you must endure him; only I cannot stay to keep him company. Put him where you like."

Lady Vallance, holding out a hand to both her old servants, hurried across the passage to the house-door. She speedily made her arrangements with the postillion, and leaped into the chaise, which at once proceeded in the direction of the Hall.

CHAPTER V.

LORD VALLANCE'S WIFE.

Miss Drelincourt had but lately left the dining-room when Lord Lionel's valet, approaching his master, whispered something into his ear. The words caused a flush of surprise to suffuse his countenance. After an interval of a few moments, during which he attempted to assume an appearance of indifference, he murmured something to his host about "urgent private affairs," and left the room.

The old gentleman looked a little uneasy at first, fearing his intended son-in-law might have been told something about his daughter; his nephew's curiosity was excited by the in-

cident, but there being another guest at table, neither ventured to make any remark.

Great was Lord Lionel's astonishment on receiving a somewhat mysterious communication purporting that the young lady from the Grange was in a carriage at the gate, and wished to speak with him. On going out into the hall, he found his servant awaiting him there with further explanations. The carriage had not driven to the front door, but had stopped near a back entrance, a stable-boy having been sent to summon Lord Lionel's valet, to whom the singular message had been entrusted.

Lord Lionel caught up his hat, and presently was standing before the Crowland chaise, looking in at the open window in the greatest possible state of astonishment.

The rain by this time had ceased, and the moon was shining upon the pallid face of the occupant of the vehicle. She had been sitting there watching and waiting with intense expectation. As he approached, she shrunk back, covering her face with her hands.

"Oh Lionel, forgive me, save me!" she rcied, in a low voice.

"Good God! Julia, what has happened?"

She uncovered her face, and grasping his arm, which he had rested on the carriage window, exclaimed—

"He is come. Oh! help, save, advise me."

"He! who? You do not mean that man. If so," he added, looking into her face with a sorrowful reproach, "what can I do to help you? Interference now, would, I fear, be worse than useless."

"Useless, indeed! yet for the love of Heaven, Lionel, do not forsake me in this extremity. I am the most miserable woman upon earth, but assuredly I am rather to be pitied than blamed. That wretch I must fly from and evade—oh! counsel me what to do in this cruel emergency, for he is my husband."

Lord Lionel was evidently taken by surprise by this declaration. He knew that she had been indiscreet, perverse, and wayward, but was unacquainted with the fact that she had made known to him. The revelation relieved his mind of a load of uneasy feelings, and there came into his generous nature a sense

of compassion for her more deplorable, though less blamable fate. It was impossible for him to regard without sympathy a

> "creature so fair,
> His life so late, and sole delight,"

sitting there in her misery, claiming his aid. Pity overpowered for the moment all prudent considerations—bringing back with passionate regret the fond memory, the slumbering feelings of the past—and he gazed upon her with eyes that clearly expressed the emotions of his heart.

This sentiment did not last long. Lady Vallance had flung her hand upon the arm resting on the window-ledge. The action restored him to self-possession.

"Julia," he said sadly, "in such a case how is it possible that I can help you? You say that Lord Vallance has arrived at the Grange."

"Yes!" she answered, raising her head. "He has come to seek me—not for anything like affection—but the jealous desire of possession. You, in all probability, are ignorant of the cause I have to hold him in abhorrence."

In a few rapid, passionate words, she made him acquainted with certain passages of her life, that had remained a painful mystery to him.

"And now," she concluded, in a calmer tone, will not you, for whose sake—madly—wickedly—if you will, still for your sake, Lord Lionel, I rushed into the snare—will you not put forth a hand to save me, or counsel me what steps to take to provide an effectual remedy for the evil consequences of my folly? There must in my case be means to procure at least a legal separation—if not to break the hateful bond for ever. I know you are the last person on earth to whom I should have come—into whose hands I should venture to cast my unhappy cause—but to whom else can I apply? No power on earth shall induce me to remain another hour under the same roof with him. I would fly to the ends of the earth to escape his touch."

"Lady Vallance," Lord Lionel said, in a firmer tone, "let me take you now to Henrietta. In this house you may be certain of protection, and may depend upon my using

every exertion in my power to promote your wishes. I will go to London to-morrow."

"God bless you," she cried, laying her hand upon his arm, "then I shall be rescued. But do not ask me to stay here, for he knows of my visit. I can feel no security in this neighbourhood. And they—how could I appear before them now in my present odious position? I have deceived them; I could not bear Miss Drelincourt's wondering pity, or her cousin's sarcastic insolence. Mr. Drelincourt, too, what will he think of me?"

"But where will you go? If I can do anything for you in this unhappy business, I must be able to communicate with you. Can you go to London?"

"I think I can; he will probably go there but must not trace me. Give me your direction, and you shall speedily hear from me."

"Julia!" and he gazed on her pale face once more with profound commiseration, "What a situation, what a fate, you have brought upon yourself,——"

"Yes, yes, I know!" she replied, interrupting him quickly, "but it is useless now to reproach me; help to set me free, and then neither you

nor any one shall be troubled by me more in this world."

"But how can you travel alone through the night in entire ignorance of the road."

"Do not fear, I shall do very well. No one will harm me. The road is quite safe."

"Are you properly provided?"

"With money? yes."

"Farewell then, Julia," he murmured as he grasped her hand, "a letter directed to the Carlton Club will find me. I shall be there to-morrow. Let me hear of your safety and where I can communicate with you if necessary. In the meantime I shall take care to keep your affairs as quiet as possible. Lord Vallance, when he discovers your flight, will lose no time in following on your traces, but should he fail, he will I know be obliged to leave the country. What orders shall I give the driver?"

"I wish to get by railroad to the nearest port town; if I go to London it will be by water. Tell him to take me to the next stage beyond Welland, where I shall dismiss him, and take a train eastward. I have al-

ready spoken to him; but I wish him to think that I go direct to London."

Lord Lionel stepped back and gave full directions to the post-boy; that worthy, reconciled to his detention by the expectation of good pay, had waited patiently,—he had even ventured during the interview to creep away and leave his sleepy horses, to refresh himself by a drink at the neighbouring stables.

The chaise presently proceeded on its course; the pale face gazing out of the window on Lord Lionel as he stood in a state of troubled feeling that appeared to have absorbed all his faculties.

CHAPTER VI.

JEALOUS FEARS.

When Lord Lionel returned to the house in his abstraction he entered the drawing-room, though his feelings were in so disturbed a state as to render a *tête-a-tête* with his betrothed far from desirable. Leaning his arm against the mantel-piece he made some common-place remark, but failed to observe that it did not elicit a reply. Presently he surrendered himself entirely to a perplexed recollection of his recent interview, all that it had revealed to him, and what he had undertaken to do; his eyes all the time fixed unconsciously upon his silent companion, who apparently indifferent to his inattention sat

bending over some delicate needle-work. His mind was following the unhappy fugitive, flying from her self-chosen fate, on her doubtful, perhaps perilous journey.

But the young heiress was not so calm and undisturbed as she appeared. She had not been suffered to remain ignorant of what was passing at her father's gates.

After her cup of coffee had been handed to her the servant waited behind the other attendants, ostensibly to arrange the fire, but really to inform his mistress, with some mystery in his tone, that a carriage had come round the stable way, with the lady from the Grange, and that Lord Lionel had been called out to speak to her.

Miss Drelincourt was startled by this communication, but merely said, "I hope nothing has happened." She would not betray too much anxiety, nevertheless she waited the ensuing half hour with painful apprehension.

What could this new proceeding of her mysterious neighbour signify? she asked herself. How strange it was of her to send for Lord Lionel! why not for her father, and

what was the reason she could not enter the house?

When her lover appeared she expected an immediate explanation, but to see him instead of attempting one, stand in silent reverie, with a troubled, thoughtful countenance, was scarcely endurable. There shot a jealous pain into her heart, a troubled dread, she found it impossible to resist. Was she really only second-best in his affections, as her cousin had suggested; was she to share the fate of other women she had heard or read of, who had been victims of man's neglect or perfidy? Though a sense of pride enabled her to preserve the outward calm which met her lover's eye, her heart was swelling with inward anguish. At length Lord Lionel, recalled to a recollection of his position, probably by the silence, advanced a few steps towards her.

"I am sorry to say I shall have to leave you to-morrow," he said, evidently with some restraint.

"Indeed," she answered without looking up, "where can you be going so suddenly?"

"To London," he answered; then after a

pause with some slight hesitation, he continued, "you will be surprised to hear that your friend has left the Grange!"

"Who, Miss Eliot?" she replied, with real anxiety and surprise. "I hope no new misfortune has happened to her."

"It is a very sad affair, and I do not see clearly the end of it. Till within the last hour, I was ignorant of her real situation. It is a long and painful story."

"Here are Papa and Ferdinand," she said, as she heard their voices in the hall.

"Say nothing before your cousin," Lord Lionel continued, hastily, "your father of course shall hear everything, and then he will be able to tell you all."

Mr. Drelincourt expressed a little curiosity to know what had taken Lord Lionel from the dining-room so suddenly, but not much light was thrown on the circumstance just then.

Ferdinand Stoughton saw, however, in his lordship's abstracted and troubled look, as well as in the signs he had learnt to read in his cousin's face, that something out of the common had occurred.

"I fancied I heard a carriage," he said, "and rather expected to find that the fair Eliot had arrived."

A silence of some minutes' duration ensued; even the good-natured host looked suspiciously on his patrician guest. The old gentleman was in fact in no slight degree uneasy and dissatisfied, partly with himself—partly with his intended son-in-law—partly with his interesting neighbour. He could not reconcile himself to the way in which she seemed to have been driven back to her lonely home—nor did he like to deprive himself and his company of the delight her musical talent created. He had forgiven his daughter for her suspicions, for which he knew she was not without sufficient justification, and was only the more confirmed in his old opinion that one woman in a house was quite sufficient. He was anxious too to find out whether any note or message had been received by his daughter from the mistress of the Grange, yet he could not bring himself to make a direct inquiry.

"It must have been wretched work to-day at the old house yonder," the barrister con-

tinued. "You'll drive over, Cousin, to-morrow, I suppose, to ascertain how your friend is getting on there?"

"The weather is looking up," Lord Lionel remarked, to spare Miss Drelincourt a reply, "it is quite a lovely night—the moon unusually clear."

"Ah! you have been out?" inquired the previous speaker, inquisitively.

"I have," was the brief reply.

It encouraged no further question, and nothing further transpired.

"I start for town early to-morrow," said Lord Lionel.

Mr. Drelincourt looked surprised at this (to him) unexpected determination, and Ferdinand Stoughton observing his cousin's unmoved countenance, began to suspect that the coldness he had fancied was apparent in the relations of the engaged pair for the few last days, had come to a crisis—one it might, he hoped, even more serious than a common lovers' quarrel.

Lord Lionel, however, took the opportunity, whilst lighting Miss Drelincourt's candle in the vestibule, of pressing her hand affec-

tionately. He whispered, in a somewhat tremulous voice,—

"I shall speak to your father before I go to bed. It will be too early, I suppose, to see you to-morrow morning, but I will write. You must not judge too harshly of her. I am sure she feels grateful for your kindness, and deplores the concealment she unwisely practised; but unfortunately for herself she is very unlike you."

The young heiress heard the pleading tone in which these parting words were uttered, rather than the compliment with which they concluded. All was still mystification and obscurity, the connection between his sudden departure and her friend's abandonment of the Grange left unexplained; jealous wonder could not but be excited in her mind.

She slept but little that night, imagining all sorts of unpleasant things, and with anything rather than happy feelings she heard the sounds that denoted her lover's departure.

CHAPTER VII.

MODERN ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

THE room was dignified with the name of Library, but it was evidently put to most miscellaneous uses. There was a glazed book-case in it certainly, and it held books, but it contained many other things. There were a hundred or so volumes of all kinds and sizes,—school-books, prayer-books, novels, hand-books, poems, plays, magazines, diaries, with a row of blue-books, and encyclopædias—put together any how but in the order that a lover of books would have selected.

With them were collections of artificial flies and tackle for angling; powder-flasks,

shot-belts, bullet-moulds, and percussion caps for shooting; bows and arrows for archery; nets for butterfly hunting; shells and minerals; and apparently all kinds of things as aids for all kinds of pastime, indoors and out. In short it was a museum rather than a library, and its contents seemed much more conducive to sport than to study.

On the walls were collections of antlers of English and foreign deer, with a few sabres, rifles, and pistols; framed prints of steeple-chasing, hunting, and racing; one or two portraits of horses, and a large coloured panorama of Alpine scenery.

In one corner was a stand for sticks, of which it contained a varied assortment, from the heaviest Alpen-stock to the lightest cane. In another was a similar assortment of whips, from the long-lashed four-in-hand to the most delicate lady's riding-whip.

A faded Turkey-carpet covered the floor, except at the hearth, whereon there was the dressed skin of a Polar bear. On tables placed against the walls were cases of stuffed birds, and almost all the chairs were

littered with something that had evidently been put there to be handy, yet to be out the way. An open magazine, with its back upwards, a *Bell's Life* standing nearly upright, a dog's-eared French Grammar, a Murray's Continental Hand-Book, a large musical box, a chess-board, a young lady's walking-hat, a fishing-rod, a rosewood work-box, a telescope, a sun-shade, a small case of butterflies, and a portfolio of dried ferns, were most conspicuous.

In the centre of the apartment were three persons—two were young men, the other a girl. The former were in fashionable lounging suits, the elder of the two wearing a light moustache and beard; the younger, by at least four or five years, a moustache only. Both were smoking cigars.

The young lady was a well-grown girl, of about thirteen, with graceful limbs, unconfined by anything apparently, except a well-fitting short silk frock. Her hair, of a light auburn and of the most beautiful silken texture, hung down her back, unrestrained by either ribbon or comb. Her features resembled those of her companions, in their well-defined outline,

but were of a much more soft and agreeable expression.

They were brothers and sister, the young men being the eldest and youngest sons of the Marquis and Marchioness Mount-Trevor. Viscount Cassington, Captain of the Horse Guards (Blue), and Lord Clarence Leigh, who had not yet attained his majority, nor finished his education. Their sister was Lady Augusta Leigh, an only daughter, in a fair way of being spoiled by affectionate brothers, an indulgent father, and an indolent mother,

Two of them the reader has already been introduced to in Hyde Park; the other is a stranger to him.

The young lady was very like the Marchioness, but possessed a much more pleasing expression of conntenance. Now that her face was lighted up by animation, as she turned it from one to the other of her companions, and her graceful figure that was constantly in motion, assisting them in something in which she evidently felt the deepest interest, she presented as charming a picture as ever was described or painted.

One end of a skipping-rope had been made fast to an old-fashioned fire-screen at a con-

siderable height from the ground, the other was held by Lord Clarence, his handsome but still rather youthful face beaming with good humour. The Viscount, at a little distance, with a gold pencil-case, was, with a more serious air, writing in a morocco pocket-book. Their sister kept walking backwards slowly, and with a clear calculating glance, was eyeing the rope.

"Now look alive, Cass!" she cried, without removing her gaze. "Repeat the conditions of the bet."

"Eleven to five that you don't clear that rope," he replied.

"A running-leap, Cass?"

"Yes, a running-leap."

"You'd better not attempt it, Pussy," said Lord Clarence. "It's a good deal too high for you."

"Shut up, old fellow."

"You may have a severe fall and hurt yourself, my pet."

"Shut up."

"I really think you'd better give it up."

Lord Clarence's solicitude only elicited a louder and more peremptory order for silence

from the young lady, who continued to eye the barrier with knitted brows, as though doubtful her powers were equal to the anticipated strain upon them.

"And what will *you* bet, Clarry, that I don't do it?" she asked. "Will you bet a pony?"

"No, I don't like to tempt you into breaking your pretty neck."

"SHUT UP!" was shouted in a voice that made both the young men laugh heartily.

"I don't mind standing a half sovereign to a shilling," he added.

"Done. Book the bet, Cass," she cried. "Why, that's ten to one," she added. "*Per Jupiter!* as you used to say, when you came from Westminster, I'll do it!"

"Now my dear child!" said her elder brother, taking his cigar from his mouth to knock off the ash, "don't be desperate; I should be inconsolable if anything terrible occurred."

"Old fellow, you're afraid of losing your tin," she answered fearlessly, then clapping her hands with an exulting cry, she ran out of the room.

"What in the world is she going to do, Clarence?"

"Haven't the most remote idea."

She presently returned bringing in a plank.

"O you artful dodger!" exclaimed the Viscount.

"I wasn't born yesterday," was her cool reply; "and perhaps I'm not quite so green as I look."

The brothers glanced meaningly at each other and laughed, as she proceeded with great care to place one end of the plank on a stool, close to the extended rope, which gave it a gradual incline to the floor.

"Now then—attention!" she shouted, clapping her hands and throwing up her beautiful head, as with a series of elastic springs she retreated to the further end of the room.

"Remember, Cass! your bet's eleven to five."

"All right!"

"And yours, Clarry, ten shillings to one."

"All right!"

Lord Cassington put up his book and

pencil case, and moved to a position beyond the barrier, that would enable him to catch the leaper if she should fall, whispering to his brother to drop his end of the rope if either of her feet should touch it. The jump was a very high one, too high for a girl to attempt. But she looked confident of winning.

"Now Cass, give the time."

"One, two, three—"

With the word "off," she started with a rapid rush, the plank bent when she made her spring, and drawing up her feet close under her she bounded over the rope, not only clear, but several inches above it."

"What do you say to that, old fellow!" she cried, with exultation sparkling in her clear blue eyes, as she descended in front of her elder brother.

"You're a stunner!" replied the Viscount.

"I never saw a more beautiful leap!" added Lord Clarence, throwing down his end of the rope, and catching his sister playfully round the waist. "Why my darling Pussy with a little training you'd beat every thing on the turf."

"But compliments ain't business you

know," she replied, with a twinkling eye and a racy laugh, putting out her hand. "Cass, you've got to tip me eleven sovereigns."

"Oh!" answered the Viscount, with a look and accent of genuine astonishment. "You really mustn't be so hard upon me, Pussy. I didn't think of betting gold with you, because I suspect that your stock of that metal would not have allowed you to pay your bet if you lost."

"What did you bet, then?"

"Silver, of course."

The young lady made a disdainful grimace.

"Shillings, like Clarence, but to please you Pussy, I'll say half-crowns."

"All right!" she cried, evidently satisfied, —then rapidly made a calculation. "Eleven half-crowns make five crowns and a half. Then you've got to pay me one pound seven shillings and sixpence."

"Exactly!" said his lordship, taking a Russian leather *porte-monnaie* from a side pocket in his coat, from one of the compartments of which he selected two pieces of gold. "Here's a sovereign and a half—I'll take the change out in a kiss."

She flung her arms round his neck, and gave him an affectionate caress.

"But you won't forget the terrier you promised me?" she asked in a coaxing manner, as she hung upon his breast.

"No! Pussy, I'll give Bob Spinks directions to procure one, the first week I reach town."

"Thanks—a thousand thanks!"

"And you'll let me join in the sweepstakes for the next Derby," she added, her blue eyes still fondly fixed on his.

"I'll put a sovereign in for you myself."

"You're a trump," and she kissed him again.

Lord Clarence gave his half sovereign and received an equally loving caress, but she did not plead to him for similar indulgences. Perhaps she knew that his tastes were not so strongly of a sporting character as those of her elder brother, and that his means to gratify them were limited.

She at once secured her winnings in a pretty receptacle for coin she carried about her, which having replaced in the pocket of her frock, she turned round, and started, for she immediately became aware that a stranger

was in the room. How long he had been there she could not say, nor could either of her brothers have assisted her in stating this with any certainty, as they were quite as surprised by his appearance as herself.

"I must apologize for my intrusion," he said in a singularly bland and courteous manner. "But I have been sent here by the Marchioness Mount-Trevor, who has been good enough to consider me capable of assisting in her son's studies."

"It's mamma's pet parson," whispered the young lady.

"O! we're very glad to see you sir," exclaimed Lord Cassington, throwing away the end of his cigar, an example instantly followed by his brother.

"I have the honour of addressing Viscount Cassington?"

"Exactly; and this is your pupil, my brother Clarence."

Lord Clarence held out his hand, and gave a cordial shake to that of his tutor.

"And here is my sister Augusta."

The young lady had been carefully scrutinizing the outward man of the Reverend

Emanuel Mordecate. She saw there nothing to be afraid of—indeed his manner was singularly preposessing. She held out her hand frankly, as she looked him full in the face.

"I am fortunate in having this opportunity of an introduction to Lady Augusta Leigh," e observed.

"You're not a bit like my governess," was the strange reply.

"Am I to take that as a compliment Lady Augusta, or otherwise?"

"She's a horrid bore!"

"I'm sorry for your governess."

The young men laughed, and the reverend gentleman seemed in quite as hilarious a humour.

"I hate her!" exclaimed the young lady with hearty fervour.

"Then I have the more reason to be sorry for her."

"She's a nasty old cat, and you ain't a bit like her."

Mr. Mordecate made a profound bow, and tried to look his appreciation of the favourable comparison.

"Miss Lucretia Jefferson Stickles is rather

severe with my sister, I believe," said the Viscount. "She keeps her a little too much in harness, and drives her somewhat sharply up the educational hill, you know, sir."

"I understand. But it's very clear to me that your sister does not require severity. Any one can see at a glance that there is no lack of intelligence in her. My success in tuition, in which I have had a large experience, is owing to my always bearing in mind that I was young once myself, which enables me to make allowances for the natural shortcomings of youth."

"Miss Stickles never had such enlightened ideas in her life," observed Lord Clarence.

"She's a horrid old thing!" repeated the young lady, with additional emphasis. "Mamma picked her up in Paris when we were last there, and she has been the bane of my life ever since. Now, if you are going to coach my brother Clarence, I hope that you will drive the team an easier pace."

"Lord Clarence shall have no reason to complain," replied the tutor, apparently thoroughly enjoying the joke.

"It's easy to see you're a brick!" replied

Lady Augusta, and the laugh again became general.

"If it had been my good fortune to have been entrusted with so charming a pupil," he added, gallantly, "instead of Miss Lucretia, I am sure your progress would have been satisfactory."

"That's out of the question. Girls are not coached by men I know very well."

"I have great reason to complain. Indeed, it's impossible to estimate the loss I have sustained in having Miss Stickles preferred to myself."

"O! nonsense," answered the young lady, to the immense gratification of her brothers. "I'm not quite such a fool as I look. The verdure in my organs of vision is not, by a good deal, so conspicuous as you seem to suppose. So you need not display your fine set of teeth in that way, as if you wanted to sell them at a profit."

The mirth was louder than before, the loudest laugher being the object of the satirical remark.

"I dare say you had them cheap enough," she added.

"They were quite a bargain, as I bought them by the gross."

"You University men have always such gross ideas!" exclaimed the youthful lady, turning away petulantly, as a fresh burst of mirth arose around her. "I hate University men."

"Thank you, Lady Augusta."

"You're very welcome."

"I hope that I shall not become too proud of your ladyship's flattering opinion."

"O, that's just the way with you parsons, when a girl ventures to give them a little chaff. I hate parsons."

"I'm very sorry!" exclaimed the reverend gentleman, not at all attempting to look the regret he expressed. "I should really consider it an intolerable calamity to be under your displeasure."

"It's only my fun. Cass knows, and Clarry knows, I ain't easily put out of temper. But my governess would provoke a saint. She caught me reading 'Aurora Floyd,' instead of learning my German lesson, and I don't think her horrid clack stopped for an hour;

she rated me as if she had discovered that I was meditating beginning a sensational romance on my own account, or was going to run away with no end of stablemen, or horsewhip a whole regiment of Softys. It's too bad."

At this moment the door opened slowly, and the head of a sharp-visaged female was thrust in.

"O, here you are, Lady Augusta!" was uttered with a strong nasal drawl. "I have been hunting for your ladyship everywhere I could think of, since you skedaddled from the school-room, more than an hour ago. I opine that there need be no occasion for me to intimate that your ladyship's exercises on the major and minor scales, have not been commenced, and that your ladyship's French fable has not been translated; moreover, that your ladyship's Rule of Three sum has not had a figure added to it, since I wrote it on the slate. Likewise, your ladyship's chapter of European history has not been read. And I think it my duty to inform you, Lady Augusta—as it has been my painful duty to do more than once before—that I totally

disapprove of your ladyship absenting yourself, without leave, from your lessons, to locate yourself here, betraying in a most lamentable manner your ladyship's masculine proclivities."

There was evidently a painful effort on the part of all the gentlemen to maintain a becoming gravity during the course of this lecture. The Viscount made a desperate attempt to blow his nose, and in his confusion perpetrated an artificial sneeze instead. Lord Clarence affected to have his attention absorbed by the Alpine panorama. The Reverend Emanuel Mordecate strove hard to look unconcernedly, first on the colourless gaunt face, surmounted with heavy bands of black hair, that was projected through the half-open door, and next on the graceful, youthful form, and features expressing anything but docility that stood in the centre of the room.

"Have the goodness, Lady Augusta, to make tracks in the direction of the schoolroom," added the governess, sharply. "The time that ought to be devoted to the education of female youth, is far too

precious to be wasted in trifling amusements, more peculiarly and more particularly, as that shining light of the great American continent, the illustrious and unrivalled Channing, has stated——"

"Never mind what Channing stated," cried the speaker's impatient pupil. "What he wrote or said, was, I dare say, good enough for the people to whom it was addressed, but I don't think that any one in this room would care a straw to hear it repeated."

"I must beg Lady Augusta that you will conduct yourself towards me with more respect," added Miss Stickles, with increased severity. "Of course I do not look to Britishers for a fair opinion of the superior geniuses that have thrown the Aurora Borealis of their sublime intelligence over the greatest nation in the universal earth. But feminine decorum——"

"That'll do! exclaimed the impetuous young lady, running to the chair and snatching at the dog's-eared French book that had there been deposited.

"Lady Augusta, I must protest——"

"Lead the way Miss Stickles, I am ready

to attend you to the school-room. Spare these gentlemen the infliction of your eloquence. I am the only offender. I ought to receive the whole of the punishment."

"I protest Lady Augusta——"

"Cut it short."

"I consider it a part of my duty to——"

"*Died suddenly!*"

These words were shouted so loudly, that the governess considered it beneath her dignity to parley any longer with so violent an opponent, and withdrew her head from the half-open door. Her pupil immediately drew herself up, very rigid and dignified, folded her arms, and with the air of a Joan of Arc going to execution, marched out of the room.

The rest of the company were about making amends for their long restraint, when the door was suddenly burst open, Lady Augusta rushed in, and running up to her brother's tutor seized him by the hand. She then gazed into his face with a pitiful expression, rapidly opening and shutting both eyes.

"If we should never meet again in this sublunary sphere," she murmured in a hoarse

tragic voice, "cherish my memory—and—don't be too hard upon poor Clarry."

The next moment she had disappeared, and the joyous shouts that followed her rapidly retreating footsteps, proclaimed how completely the gentlemen had surrendered themselves to the spirit the scene between such a pupil and such a governess was pretty sure to create among men of the world.

In justice to one of the laughers, it must be said, that notwithstanding his clerical character he could appear as perfectly at home with people of rank and fashion, who make so large a portion of Good Society, as the most artificial nature amongst them. With young men of family he had always been wonderfully popular, and he was very desirous of being on confidential terms with his present companions.

"Lady Augusta was quite right," he said, as soon as his mirth had subsided a little, "There is no perceptible resemblance between Miss Stickles and myself."

"Not the slightest," said the Viscount. "But you mustn't take a prejudice against Augusta on account of certain eccentricities

of manner and language that cannot have escaped your notice. They exist more through my fault than her own."

"I do not see that there is any fault in the case," replied the reverend gentleman, with an air of candour no one knew better how to assume.

"She has always been a pet with her brothers," added Lord Clarence, "and having had no sister, has associated with them till she seems to possess much more of the spirit and language of a boy than of a girl."

"Nothing more natural. But so far from seeing any harm in it, I think it will eventually give a vigour to her character that she could not have received in the ordinary way. I hope that I may be enabled to see more of her, for in my opinion she displays a freshness and originality well worth studying."

The young men were much pleased with this opinion, as the speaker intended they should be; indeed, he had already contrived to win his way to their favourable consideration, by his complete ease of manner and gentlemanly bearing; and when, soon afterwards, Lord Cassington was about to leave the library for his dressing-room, the Viscount shook hands

heartily with his brother's "coach," and kindly expressed a hope that he might be permitted to cultivate his acquaintance. Of course the reverend gentleman reciprocated this advance, but did it in a way that was without the slightest approach to servility.

Being left alone with his pupil the Reverend Emanuel Mordecate proceeded to make himself acquainted with the young man's progress in his studies, his religious opinions, his political views, and his ideas of a profession. Lord Clarence could not resist the feeling of profound interest in him and his career, which his new acquaintance exhibited, and therefore withheld nothing. He soon ascertained how able this man was to help him, and of his willingness to do this he could not entertain a doubt.

A great deal of sound advice was given him at once, with innumerable valuable suggestions as to his future course of study, and a scheme of reading was drawn out which they were to pursue together while remaining under the same roof, and continued by correspondence when further personal communication became impossible.

When the conference was concluded, the reverend gentleman felt that he had no reason to be dissatisfied with his position at Mount-Trevor Court. He was too clear-sighted to be content with his interview with the Marchioness, yet he did not despair of final success in that quarter; and he had been able to break ground in other directions which would enable him to carry on more extended operations.

When he returned to his chamber for the night, he had recourse to the same writing-desk that had served him at the Rectory of Middlecombe Regis, and wrote a communication of special importance to the Monsignor he had formerly addressed. This was followed by another of at least equal interest to a certain high dignitary of the same Church, at Rome. He addressed and sealed both letters with particular care, and then consigned them to his pocket-book.

When his epistolary labours had concluded, the Reverend Emanuel Mordecate fell on his knees, to say his prayers before consigning himself to his place of rest; but again he repeated the remarkable inconsistency he

had committed under the roof of his former pupil. No Latin Ave Maria or Pater-Noster came from his lips—he murmured distinctly Hebrew words, such as are familiar to the Rabbis of the principal synagogues throughout the civilized world, and employed by their congregations old and young.

Afterwards he sat down awhile in a chair, and surrendered himself to the pleasures of memory. Ambition appeared to have no sort of influence over his mind—his soul was absorbed by the past. The remote past —the past of an exquisitely happy childhood. There was but one scene that had any attraction for him, and it could scarcely have been more simple and more homely—there was but one face that ever entered upon that scene. The place was the well-remembered bed-room over the curiosity shop in the Kalver-Straat at Amsterdam, and the features were those of the beautiful mother whose love had rendered both triumphant over Time.

When this intensely worldly nature, this hypocrite, this impostor, this spy, rose from his chair, his face was wet with tears.

CHAPTER VIII.

REVELATIONS.

At breakfast Miss Drelincourt looked pale and anxious, whilst her father's countenance was still more disturbed. Not only did he fail to exhibit his genial urbanity, but his mood seemed unnaturally morose and taciturn. Ferdinand Stoughton found his most facetious remarks irritably responded to.

Henrietta followed her father into his study immediately after, but he only said, "My dear, I am going to be busy." The mystery preying upon her mind was, therefore, not to be solved in the way she had been led to expect.

She began to consider herself very ill-used.

She who had been till lately everything to everybody surrounding her, seemed to have become secondary in interest to a fascinating interloper; for her father's mood this morning she hesitated not to ascribe to what he had heard from her lover the night before.

Nor was she far mistaken. Lord Lionel had gone to Mr. Drelincourt's room, and surprised him not a little by what he had to tell. Surprise was but the mildest sentiment his revelations drew forth. Everything gave way to a more personal feeling. He was disposed to be indulgent as to Lord Lionel's participation in the history of his fair neighbour, looking upon his experience of her fascination as a perfectly natural result; regarding it, in short, as one sensible man will look on the early entanglement of another. He did not consider his daughter's position less honourable, or her prospect of happiness less promising than it had been previous to her new friend's appearance in their circle. But personally he was astounded, wounded to the quick for the time. He had been allured by his ignorance of the young lady's true position, as much as by her attractions, into

what he was ashamed to own to any one, for he had admired her more than he had for many a year admired any woman, and felt towards her what he had never expected to feel again; for the first time since his wife's death—moreover, he had allowed his daughter to assume a secondary place in his consideration.

Lord Lionel, who knew nothing of all this, interpreted the effect produced upon his listener as condemnatory of the deception which had been put upon him, and feeling himself in some degree involved therein, took the implied reproach to himself. Having announced their friend's flight, and the reason of it, he explained the commission he had received from her, with some embarrassment. He terminated the interview abruptly; leaving his companion less astonished by the disclosure than annoyed by his own concern in it.

Mr. Drelincourt's mind was too troubled to enter upon the subject with his daughter the next morning, and as for his nephew, the old gentleman avoided being left alone with him. It was a strange position of affairs, altogether.

He could not quite understand it. He recalled to mind all he had heard about the Grange, including the romantic history of her whose occupation of it had rendered the old place to him so attractively picturesque. She, in turn, had abandoned it, leaving it tenanted by the last person in the world he cared to have as a neighbour. Yet that profligate might at any moment walk into his house and demand his wife—a young lady to whom he had actually made love. He had never been in so trying a position since he had been a country gentleman. In his irritated state of mind he could not help coming to the conclusion that he had suffered himself to become the dupe of a pretty face. Circumstances, however, had changed. He had discovered that his charming neighbour had a husband alive,—and such a husband.

In the meantime Ferdinand Stoughton carefully avoided by his uncle made it his business to seek out his cousin, ostensibly to cheer and sympathize with her, really to obtain some reliable information; but the heiress was not accessible, and when accessible, was not communicative. She was anxious and

unhappy, but her's was a species of anxiety which shrunk from confidential participation. She did not even inform her kinsman of her friend's departure, so that the gentleman strongly suspecting something unusual in that quarter,—indeed more than suspecting the object of last night's mysterious appearance in the precincts of the Hall,—determined to ride over to the Grange and make inquiries.

Charity opened more readily than usual to his appeal. She seemed indeed to have been on the look-out for him, and her round face had a particularly scared expression. On seeing the fine gentleman with whose fashionable appearance she was not unacquainted, and hearing his polite inquiries after the health of her lady, knowing he came from the Hall, she looked still more bewildered.

"Is she not a-coming, sir?" she inquired.

"Who?" asked Ferdinand, eagerly.

"Why my mistress; sure she's gone to the Hall, and my sister Dorcas wants her back again, as much as I do."

"But my good woman," he replied in a

patronizing tone, "she's not there; I give you my word, she has not been in my uncle's house since Friday. When did she leave you?"

She wrung her hands with a helpless, despairing look, and then told him under what circumstances she had left her home. The visitor inquired who was the gentleman whose arrival had so disturbed her lady.

No explanation could be given except that he had been taken dreadful bad, and was constantly calling for her mistress, and that Sister Dorcas didn't know what to do with him.

The young barrister could hardly conceal his satisfaction. Here, he thought, was mystery with a vengeance. With professional dexterity he proceeded to extract more particulars from Charity, who, having either forgotten her mistress's injunctions, or unable to repress her natural loquacity, readily told all she knew, and a great deal that she did not know. Mr. Stoughton finally won her confidence so completely by the polite interest he manifested for her distress, that when, prompted by an insatiable curiosity, he asked if he might be permitted to go and see if he could advise

any plan of relieving her and her sister of their troublesome visitor, she seemed delighted with the idea.

Having seen his horse properly secured, Ferdinand Stoughton found himself for the first time mounting the stairs, to his great inward satisfaction, guided by Sister Charity.

CHAPTER IX.

A MISERABLE NIGHT.

Lord Vallance's first proceeding the night before, when left to his congenial solitude, had been to pull down a bell-rope. This not performing the duty he required, from the head of the staircase he began to shout to the servants, by the most singular appellations, to bring him water, brandy, and whatever else they could procure in the shape of refreshment.

In anything but a cheerful spirit did the old creatures set about obeying his behests. At last, after repeated shouts and endless execrations, Dorcas and Charity, each carrying a tray, entered the room in which their

self-constituted master, wrapped in a dressing-gown, sat shivering before the fire.

He had thrown open the doors of the adjoining chambers.

"You hag!" he cried, as the first entered, "is a fellow to be frozen to death for want of a fire, and to be starved to death for want of a meal? You horrible old Witch of Endor, you Sycorax—you——"

"If you please, sir," said the elder, gravely, while putting down her tray, "my name is Dorcas, and sister's name is Charity."

"Your name is Hell-cat, and your sister's Mother Beelzebub!" replied Lord Vallance, fiercely.

The younger of the two women looked at her sister to see how she would take the affront, but finding that she looked over her spectacles at the offender with far more curiosity than indignation, she did not venture on a reply.

"Look here, you pair of Hecates. I'm not going to put up with this treatment. It don't suit my book at all. I feel dreadfully ill. Never felt so dreadfully seedy in all my life. I almost feel as if regularly used

up—by Jove I do! I've been used to live among Christians, not among such antediluvian hippopotamuses as you. Let me have a good fire, a good dinner, and oceans of devilish good brandy and water—hot and strong. Do you hear, you untameable hyenas?"

Again Charity looked at Dorcas for some sign which should encourage her to let off a little of her fast increasing irritation, but Dorcas continued to lay the cloth, only stopping to curtsey at every ugly name with which she was pelted, as if she regarded it as a distinction that demanded a respectful acknowledgment.

Swallowing some of the hot beverage which with a tremulous hand he had quickly mixed for himself, he desired his attendants, in language none of the politest, to bring him blankets and lay them on the large old-fashioned couch he had wheeled close to the sitting-room fire. Then he made them pile up the fuel, announcing that as it seemed the only habitable hole in the house, he should remain there for the night.

When they returned with the blankets, he

began questioning them sharply as to what time they expected their mistress; this was followed by a running fire of interrogations respecting their young lady's proceedings since she had lived with them. Dorcas always answered, and though her information was exceedingly minute, it was given readily and with perfect good humour. Her experienced eye detected the signs of ill-health which showed themselves in his pallid visage. They, in some measure, neutralized her indignation. Her benevolent nature was so far won upon by Lord Vallance's helplessness that she presently strove to amuse him with a little social gossip. This did not last long; with an oath she was told to hold her confounded tongue, to take away those abominable messes—the plain food they had brought—and leave him.

This command they readily obeyed, but Dorcas was not without considerable anxiety respecting the state of their strange visitor. His want of appetite was another bad sign.

Lord Vallance passed a miserable night, full of ugly dreams, and uglier waking visions and sensations. The first part alternately dozing, or in a wakeful expectation of his

wife's return. During the latter part his nerves became the more painfully excited. Strange noises from the adjoining room, as well as in curious quarters of the one he occupied, which the real stillness of the night outside rendered more supernatural, constantly startled him out of his attempts at slumber.

He dozed off at last into a dream of a little delicate-looking woman, with large dark eyes, standing looking wistfully at him. Presently she changed into a taller and more youthful form with a paler, younger, nice intellectual face; her eyes gleamed on him a less gentle expression; he thought that his wife had returned, and stood beside him, but when he started up and put out his hand to take hold of her dress, he only clutched vacancy and found himself in darkness, save for a red hot coal or two consuming amongst the embers.

Lord Vallance called himself a fool for causing his wife to leave the house, and cursed the horrid discomfort both in mind and body, he experienced. Never before had such unpleasant visions disturbed his mind. He felt

unusually apprehensive. He drained the last dregs of the brandy-bottle which he had placed on a table by his side; he did so in the hopes of inducing stupor; he even thought in his growing terror of knocking up the old women, as if their presence even would have been a comfort.

Some mysterious sounds proceeding from the other end of the room so irritated him that, in a paroxysm of excitement, he sat up and dashed the empty bottle in that direction. The noises ceased with a celerity almost as mysterious as their origin, and he was left for the rest of the night undisturbed. He wondered how Lady Vallance could exist here alone, even for a week.

He continued to beguile his mind with the strangest speculations, till he fell into a sound sleep. He was awakened by the crowing of the cock at dawn, and found himself in an aguish fever.

Terribly he stormed at Dorcas and Charity when they ventured to peep in; after that they began to feel alarmed about him, for from hour to hour he grew worse. He became furious when the time for his wife's

return had passed, but would not hear of a doctor being sent for. He grew more and more irrational, and so Ferdinand Stoughton found him.

CHAPTER X.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

LORD VALLANCE sprung up on his couch at the sound of a fresh step on the staircase, under the idea that his prohibition had been neglected, and that "the old hags had sent for the doctor." At the sight of the young barrister in his fashionable suit, there came to the fevered man something like the sense of comfort a white man may experience at the sight of another white man in a land of savages.

He felt as if a current of fresh air had been let in upon him, and shrunk back on his couch. A glance at the ruffled, rugged face upon the sofa, sufficed to put the young

man on a pleasant footing with the individual on whom he had intruded. They stared at each other for a few seconds, however, and then Stoughton began.

"I ought to apologize—but hearing you were ill, and as I presumed a stranger in this neighbourhood——

"Extremely charitable! No apology, pray. It is a relief for a fellow to see a civilized being in this queer place. Yes, I am devilish seedy—but may I request to know who I have the honour of addressing?"

The sick man tossed his covering about with the restlessness of fever.

"My name is Ferdinand Stoughton, of the Temple. I ought to have sent up my card—only such a refined proceeding seemed out of place under the circumstances—nor did I expect——"

"Any difficulty in getting at a fellow who is so devilish seedy," his lordship said, making an hysterical attempt at a laugh.

"Ah! well, no! I confess I came uninvited," Ferdinand replied, catching readily the meaning of this insinuation. "The lady who inhabits this ancient tenement, after

whose health I came to inquire, has not as yet extended to me the privilege of admittance."

In spite of the frank and truthful manner in which these words were uttered, Lord Vallance smiled incredulously.

"Pray can you inform me of the present whereabouts of that lady? An engagement deprived me of her society last evening, but if you could convey to her my sense of the expediency of relieving me of the attendance of those wretched hags downstairs, I should be everlastingly indebted to you."

"I am really sorry. I quite sympathize with you in your distressing position, but if you allude to the fair Eliot, she called, as I have ascertained, at one of the Hall gates last night, in a hired chaise—had an interview of some half an hour with one of my uncle's guests, and then in the same mysterious manner disappeared. I am totally ignorant of her present destination."

"The devil you are! Then she is not at the Hall? Do you live there?"

"I have the honour to be a near kinsman of its owner. But will you excuse me if I

ask whether your complaint is infectious?"

He had remained near the door, as if he entertained some misgiving as to the risk he might be running.

"Not as far as I know," was the impatient response. "A fellow can't always tell what's the matter with him, you know; aguish fever, I should suppose. But pray consult your own inclination as to staying. All I know for certain is I'm devilish seedy."

"Oh! if that is all, there can be no harm in my staying. Quinine's the thing you want, nothing but quinine will do; still your's is a case, I think, for medical treatment, and that I must undertake to procure for you. Rather a savage the professed practitioner of this district, but he ought to know what ague is, it being pretty prevalent in this part of our country."

The patient growled his dissatisfaction at the necessity for any such interference and his visitor strove to gain a little more information from him.

"But about the lady—can I be of any use to you in that quarter?"

"It doesn't look as if you could. She

isn't where she professed to be going——. I conclude you are not quite unacquainted with her?"

"No! not quite! For the last three weeks or more she has come and gone amongst us like a beautiful dream, charming all hearts with her wonderful grace and talent."

"I've no doubt of it. But one more question, and then—I am really unfit for the exertion of conversation. May I ask who was the particular individual whom she favoured last night with this outdoor interview you mention?"

"Well, as you inquire, I hope I shall not be making mischief by telling you; it was Lord Lionel Leigh, the intended son-in-law of my uncle."

"The deuce it was!" and an angry flush spread over the sick man's features. "He is there then? Ah! and he has private interviews with my lady."

"Was there I should say, for he left this morning."

"They left together, of course?" asked Lord Vallance.

"No, no. I have said nothing of the sort.

I have a great respect for Lord Lionel, very great respect indeed. I esteem his lordship exceedingly, and consider him the soul of honour."

"The soul of fiddlesticks!" was the contemptuous commentary.

"The position in which he stands towards my dear cousin makes it difficult for me to countenance any scandal against him. As for the lady, I can affirm, however inexplicable the circumstances, that there has been nothing in her conduct since she has come amongst us to which a shadow of suspicion——"

"Oh, no! of course not! She's dreadfully good!" cried the sick man, with a hoarse laugh.

"Not till quite lately did either of us become aware that any acquaintance had existed between his lordship and our fair neighbour; we thought they met as perfect strangers; nevertheless their conduct excited my observation, and I must say that it was often of a character likely to create suspicion. It was a delicate affair, however, to meddle in. But I am a brute to keep you longer in this state," he now said, hastily. "I must

have you properly attended to. My uncle, I am sure, will be happy to do you any kind office. By the way ours was but a one-sided introduction; would you favour me with your name?"

The barrister now perceived a cloud overshadowing the stranger's countenance. "Pray consult your own inclination in the matter," he added, "a man with the ague may be excused conventional forms and ceremonies, only——"

"Only you would naturally like to know to whom you are kindly disposed to act the good Samaritan."

"Not at all; besides, to tell you the truth, at the risk of your esteeming me a Jesuit, I have a capital head—if for nothing else—for putting two and two together—a professional instinct, I suppose it must be called. My conjectures in similar cases usually supply the place of information. Give me but a few starting points and circumstances, put me in the room ten minutes with any man of marked characteristics, and I never fail making a pretty good guess as to his social position. On this occasion, a letter I received a few

days ago, explains to me your interest in this fascinating lady——"

Lord Vallance again laughed hoarsely.

"Interest! By Jove, I seem to share in it with a good many others. At any rate the lady's interest in your humble servant seems at an end."

"*La donna é mobile,*" quoted Stoughton, sympathetically; "but let me hope that if any old claim of duty or affection binds you together——"

"Little enough of that I should imagine —what the Church can't effect I must be powerless to produce. If it wasn't that I feel so devilish seedy——"

"But do I understand you aright? Church! why you don't mean to say——"

"Ah! you had imagined something less respectable—— that I had come to this delightful residence like the rest of the fair proprietor's admirers, on sufferance, instead of being her legal lord and master."

"Then I have the pleasure of speaking to Lord Vallance?"

"I acknowledge to being that much-abused individual," answered the other, care-

lessly, "and never did a fellow have such a run of bad luck as seems to have pursued me since my first acquaintance with the lady of whom we have been talking. I have been dreadfully ill-used, by Jove! And now, my dear sir, if you will send me a doctor I shall be obliged to you. Thanks to these confounded old women downstairs, who half smothered me with blankets, and choked me with messes, my sudden attack seems to have subsided, and the fellow might prevent a relapse. But I know I am horribly seedy, my dear sir, and the sooner I am set on my legs the better.

Ferdinand Stoughton, though it always took a good deal to astonish him, was astonished. Notwithstanding the clue his letter had given him, which had assisted him in associating his cousin's fascinating friend with the heroine of the scandalous chronicle, he had not been prepared to hear that it was the veritable Lady Vallance who had so thoroughly beguiled his relatives, and he had good reason to believe had equally imposed on Lord Lionel. The position held by that brilliant adventuress as the wife of so

notorious a person as Lord Vallance made the affair more attractive to him.

He wanted to know something more—he could not have too much of such a remarkable scandal—so he lingered to make a few sympathizing inquiries. These elicited, though with some difficulty, that Lord Vallance had merely come to look after his lady, and take her back to Italy. Circumstances, into which we need not now enter, had temporarily separated them shortly after their union.

As there was evidently more mystery to unravel, the young barrister proposed coming again; indeed went so far as to offer to send his own servant to sit up with the invalid. To do him justice, he was half inclined to do this himself, as it would afford him the opportunities he wanted for investigating the whole case—but he refrained from so Quixotic a demonstration of good nature.

Lord Vallance, though he owned that a second vigil in his horribly seedy state was not desirable, declined, with thanks, the civilities of his new acquaintance. He would brave the rats, the ghosts, and the witches one more night, he said. He was left therefore

again in solitude, till such time as Dorcas and Charity came up with fresh supplies of messes. It is impossible to describe their astonishment when "the fine gentleman from the Hall," as the two old servants called him, had assured them that their troublesome lodger was their young mistress's lawful husband.

CHAPTER XI.

THE COAST CLEAR.

STOUGHTON went back through the village with the intention of calling on the clergyman and dropping him a hint—with no little malicious satisfaction in his secret heart—that there was some employment for his ministerial services at the Grange, where he would find plenty of room for spiritual improvement. He enjoyed the thoughts of the parson's consternation, when he heard the *dénouement* of the little romance in which he had been so profoundly interested.

The sexton was digging a grave, and he told him over the church-yard wall, in answer to his inquiry for the minister, that he had gone away to London over-night.

"'Spose he'd be back to bury the dead blacksmith to-morrow," the old man ventured to observe.

"So, so," thought Ferdinand Stoughton, "another fugitive. Has he gone on the same track, I wonder?"

He proceeded to the Hall, thinking it easier to despatch a messenger from thence to the Crowland doctor; and eager to reveal his discoveries to his relatives.

Mr. Drelincourt was not however to be found. Since his daughter's display of feminine jealousy he had felt more strongly assured than ever, that no two women could agree in the same house. He hoped that a permanent estrangement had been established between the two friends, for he began to feel annoyed at the gossip he was sometimes obliged to hear about his fascinating neighbour. As for Lord Lionel's share in the unpleasant business, he came to the conclusion that it was better not to disquiet her mind about it. It was altogether a very disagreeable affair, into which there was no occasion his innocent, pure-minded girl should be dragged. He therefore kept out of her way as much as he could, to avoid being questioned.

So Miss Drelincourt was found by her cousin, alone, pale and dispirited. He was disappointed when he discovered that much of his information was no news to the heiress, but the astonishment which the rest of his communications occasioned, satisfied him completely.

Delicately and cautiously did he allow what he had heard insinuated concerning Lord Lionel to transpire, but what he said, coupled with the acknowledged fact of their secret interview, and almost simultaneous departure, was enough to carry, he thought, conviction to her mind. The seeds of suspicion had for some time been germinating there, and Stoughton found himself acting the part of cousinly consoler rather more *con amore* perhaps than Lord Lionel would have approved of; and the young lady, now disposed to lean on his experience, displayed a confidence that emboldened him to insinuate how he had always loved her, more than any one, and that it would have been much to her happiness had she been satisfied with his devotion. She took no notice of this speech, indeed had not heard a word of it. Her thoughts were far distant.

The clever young barrister imagined that if only something like an elopement could be proved, he would be sure to win his cause.

But his uncle dashed his hopes completely by showing, when Ferdinand forced the subject on him, that he was not only in the secret of Lord Lionel's expedition to London, but cognizant of all other facts bearing on Lady Vallance's past and present history. Moreover the old gentleman became so remarkably testy on the subject, that his nephew was obliged to cut short the interview, and confine his operations to his cousin.

What he thought fit to tell her of her father's knowledge of the painful mystery, was far from satisfying her doubts of her lover. She knew that he had once loved her fascinating acquaintance; her marriage with another had alone perchance severed them. They were now probably together; he, brought closely again under the power of her her attractions, no doubt actively employed in her service, whilst his betrothed sat neglected at home. Her father's reserve and avoidance of her too, seemed ominous. Perhaps, though he cared not to tell any one,

he and Lionel had had words before parting. They possibly had quarrelled, and the marriage might be broken off.

Ferdinand, she thought, had been right. He had warned her from the first—there must have been something very wrong in the disposition of this adventuress, to have permitted her to mix amongst them while in so terribly false a position. She must have been wicked, or she could not so easily have destroyed the happiness of one who earnestly desired to be her friend, and had changed even her father towards her. All appeared to have changed except Ferdinand. He was still staunch to her—he had never been dazzled out of his cousinly appreciation.

A storm of troubled feeling passed across the hitherto calm surface of Miss Drelincourt's disposition, but she never considered that she had been wronged by her patrician lover. Lord Lionel stood in her estimation free from censure. In her estimation his honour was unimpeachable, and she loved him more devotedly than ever.

It irritated her not a little to feel that she had humiliated herself to accept sympathy

and confidence from her kinsman who was incapable of appreciating her lover's high qualities, and had suffered herself to be deluded by his assumption of tender consideration and more than cousinly solicitude.

A letter arrived from Lord Lionel, but in her irritated mood it seemed anything but satisfactory. It stated the writer's conviction that her father had told her everything relating to the painful business that had taken him to town. He hoped not to be detained many days from her, but insinuated that lawyers were tedious people to have to deal with. The very business-like document further stated, that immediately he had placed the affair in a proper train for settlement, he should return.

There was no direct mention of Lady Vallance—no allusion to the writer's having seen her; in short, nothing to appease jealous curiosity or doubt.

The letter was left unanswered, so no other came during the ensuing week, throughout which time the state of things continued much the same; only Lord Vallance was reported to be much worse. Indeed Ferdinand

Stoughton, who did not suspend his attentions to the invalid, but visited the stricken reprobate daily, began to perceive that his malady was something more serious than aguish fever.

The constitution of the *roué* seemed incapable of rallying from the attack, stimulated as it had been at first by the brandy his lordship had drank, and the usual remedies were administered without effect. Even Mr. Drelincourt, who at first contented himself by sending messages of inquiry, felt himself moved by his neighbourly feelings to order that the sick man might be supplied from his house with all things likely to minister to his relief and comfort. He could not overcome his natural repugnance to the character and reputation of the man, by paying Lord Vallance a personal visit.

CHAPTER XII.

ABSENT WITHOUT LEAVE.

But where was the zealous Curate, that he did not seek out the lost sheep which had strayed into his fold? Was he still absent?

The dead blacksmith might have lain unburied the next day if a neighbouring minister, who sometimes assisted in emergencies, had not been sent for by Miss Lætitia. That prudent lady, in answer to eager inquiries, contented herself with saying that her brother had gone to London on parochial business. But his stupid servant-maid only stood open-mouthed when questioned, and supposed her master had been called away to see some dying folks at a distance, and

would be back come Saturday night, whilst his man-of-all-work cogitated the matter more critically with the sexton, who had a few private fancies in his own head concerning what he called the queer "spirreting" away of the young minister. In the minds of some of his humbler parishioners there seemed some mystery in his departure.

Mr. Fairholme was walking along the road with a small black bag in one hand and a light overcoat over his clerical suit, when the Crowland chaise passed him quickly. Through the window he discerned a familiar face, wearing an expression of terrible distress. A sudden impulse seized him; he could not control it. He set off running, and followed the vehicle.

There was a turnpike to be paid outside the village. The chaise stopped there, and the delay gave him time to reach it just as the gate was about to be flung open; and hurriedly opening the door, to the astonishment of the occupant, he addressed her in his customary deferential manner, though a little flurried by his exercise.

"Ah, Miss Mauleverer, I am very glad of this

opportunity of meeting you. I am going to London on urgent parochial business, and as I could not get a conveyance, I am afraid that I shall be too late to catch the train."

Lady Vallance, great as was her distress of mind, would not restrain a desire to be courteous to a person to whom she owed many friendly services. She thought, too, that the escort of a man of his honourable character, might be of advantage to her. Promptly she invited him to share her conveyance as far as it would take him on his road. He sprung in, and the vehicle was presently proceeding on its destination. He had, however, been recognized by a labourer returning from his work, who, in the small public-house the same evening, spoke of having seen the parson running away with a young lady; hence the "spirreting" of the somewhat scandalized sexton.

The clergyman appeared to take the journey quite as a matter of course, though the fact of his interesting parishioner leaving Middlecombe Regis thus suddenly, and as it were mysteriously, rather startled him. His mind, however, was engrossed with a great

idea, in the successful development of which, his companion, he thought, was necessary, but he was aware that this success was not so clearly before him as he wished it to be. This journey was a golden opportunity which he resolved not to lose, yet he felt so embarrassed that he could not bring himself to approach the subject that lay nearest his heart.

Lady Vallance talked to him of his schools, and his poor, and his coal and blanket club, and every subject that she thought would most interest him, and he answered with sufficient liveliness to maintain the conversation. Nevertheless, both occasionally gave signs of abstraction. One found it impossible to shake off the presence of her terrible troubles, the other constantly recurred to his great idea.

It was by this time between nine and ten o'clock. The horses—though the post-boy, urged by the promise of good pay, whipped them on to a pretty good pace along the lonely roads—had been well worked already, and were not good for much more, but on they sped a few miles further, then at a small side inn where vehicles could be obtained for

the eastward and southern railways, they halted.

She wanted a carriage to take her to the railway station, leading eastward to a port town from which London vessels departed; then she and Mr. Fairholme entered at the landlady's invitation, and stood before the half-extinguished fire in the bar room, apparently in deep and anxious meditation.

"You are going further, Mr. Fairholme?" she inquired. "I think you said?"

"Yes, I am going to London," he replied "I hope that you will permit me to be of service to you. It would be imprudent for one so inexperienced in English travelling to proceed so far unattended."

Lady Vallance appeared thoughtful; her beautiful countenance was impressed with that melancholy gravity which had made so powerful an impression on his mind, when he caught the first glance of it from the pulpit. Again it brought suggestions of Filippo Lippi, of Fra Angelico, and other great pre-Raphaelites, objects of his enthusiastic admiration.

"Your escort, Mr. Fairholme, will, I have

no doubt, be a protection to me," she said, in a sweet voice, but with rather a hesitating manner. "But I am afraid that it might be injurious to you?"

He could not comprehend how it could be injurious. Even supposing she were a Catholic, and it came to the Bishop's ears that he had accompanied her in a long journey, there could be no rational objection to such companionship, as they were both proceeding to the same place.

The zealous Curate knew that his Anglican faith had been established on too secure a foundation to be disturbed by male or female agents. Should it be proved that the young lady was a Papist emissary, as subtle as his old tutor Mordecate, he was quite certain that she would not convert him. There was another side of the question. It was not quite impossible for him to convert her. If a chance presented itself of putting before her the arguments of the Reformed faith, he did not feel a doubt that he should be able to bring her back to the fold from which she had strayed.

The Reverend Septimus Fairholme cheerfully accepted his position.

Lady Vallance felt that she knew very little of England and English travelling. If a clergyman of his excellent character chose to facilitate her purpose of reaching London by a circuitous route, why, she asked herself, should she gainsay him? She by no means disliked the young man. Refined and gentlemanlike, there had been from the first something in his purity of thought and feeling which had won upon her regard.

She interposed no further objections. So, after a delay of ten minutes, a shabby chaise was brought round, the baggage lifted in, and the travellers following, the postboy cracked his whip and the horses started. A little after midnight they reached the small railway station.

CHAPTER XIII.

TRAVELLING.

It was not a long journey; before the first faint streaks of dawn the train had brought the zealous Curate and his interesting parishioner to M——. He took charge of her valise as well as his own little travelling companion, and they were thus conducted by a porter to an inn. He begged her earnestly to take some rest while he ascertained what time the steamer started.

At twelve o'clock he was in attendance, when his fellow-traveller re-appeared, refreshed by the short interval of repose she had enjoyed. They lost no time in getting on board.

The passage to the Thames was one of fourteen hours. Lady Vallance preferred to remain on deck, and became the object of much curious attention and remark to the rest of the passengers; they, like herself and her companion, were able to brave the motion of the North Sea.

Her attractive appearance, and somewhat nun-like simplicity of dress, with her unquestionable clerical attendant, suggested the idea of a Lady Abbess and a Jesuit Priest. The speculations respecting them were of the most romantic character.

When Lady Vallance got tired of pacing the deck, and gazing over the bulwarks, she went below, leaving her fellow-traveller the sole object of public curiosity. Most of the next day she spent on deck, the public interest in her increasing every hour; but she herself sat apart, generally absorbed and thoughtful, her pale guardian hovering near her, carefully refraining from intruding upon her meditations.

When they landed at the wharf she turned to him. "I want a quiet hotel," she said, "yet not too far out of the way of the West-End."

He named one he had himself occasionally occupied. It seemed to satisfy her, and a cab having been called they proceeded.

When they had alighted, she turned to him and held out her hand as if to dismiss him.

"Mr. Fairholme," she said, with a tremulousness in her voice she could not entirely conceal, "take now my grateful farewell."

He took her hand, bowed over it respectfully, murmured a few words about the pleasure he had felt in performing the slight service which had now terminated, then returned to the cab, and ordered the driver to convey him to another hotel.

CHAPTER XIV.

WHILST Miss Mauleverer and her mother were residing at Florence the society they found there was not exactly such as a prudent guardian would have selected for two inexperienced women. The elder, however, soon discovered that the careful cultivation of her daughter's graces rendered their position in the gay world very difficult to maintain. Julia was admired to an extent that sometimes made the English matron more anxious than triumphant. The young lady's success was owing not so much perhaps to her superior personal appearance, for there were several ladies in the city who might lay claim to

more dazzling loveliness, but to a grace of manner that is more generally described as fascination.

This gift was combined with an intelligence of a higher order, which made the youthful beauty the star of the social circle in which she moved. Year after year these characteristics had become more developed, and though Mrs. Mauleverer had good right to believe that her gifted child would be soon removed from her care, her anxiety as to the object of her choice became daily greater.

She could not fail to observe that Julia was impulsive as well as fond of admiration. She indulged in flirtations with a freedom she disapproved. She was in a country and in a society where women are generally married early, without the privilege of choice, and till marriage, when liberty begins, are kept in a state of subjection and restraint.

Julia's English nature would not conform to the order of things which prevailed. She seemed determined to enjoy as much liberty as she could obtain. She felt her power, and was resolved to enjoy it to the utmost. Her taste she considered was too delicate, her will

too independent to allow of her being betrayed into any imprudence. The mere flatterers who thronged round her she made but the passing amusement of her every-day life, whilst the earnestness and sincerity of the better class of her admirers seemed only to minister to her vanity.

In short, she was not one to be made a victim, but rather to victimize.

So matters went on till her twenty-second year, when Lord Lionel Leigh appeared upon the scene, bringing a new aspect to the ever-shifting spirit of her dream. That he was English, possessing every English attraction, that he remained apart and apparently undazzled, made him an object of special interest in her eyes—a more than usually deserving subject on which to exercise her never-failing fascination.

Lord Lionel had watched her, indeed, like an Englishman—cautiously and fastidiously from afar—and then equally like his compatriots, when once he had determined to advance, as incautiously and nobly gave himself up to the influences of an attachment, such as only a true-hearted Englishman can

feel. Julia's affectionate nature, too, was thoroughly awakened, while all her capacity for passionate attachment, which had hitherto been scarcely affected, became developed. His high qualities of character and mind, as well as person, seemed to expand in her all the best attributes of her own disposition, and whilst her attractions were put forth to their fullest power, rendered her conduct equally admirable. Lord Lionel was suddenly recalled to England before he had been able to make any declaration of his sentiments.

Julia was piqued by her lover's disappearance, and misinterpreted its cause.

Under the excitement of the pain and doubt it created, she sought diversion by thoughtlessly exercising her charms on every man who came within the circle of their influence.

Lord Lionel, on his return to Florence, became aware of this change in Miss Mauleverer with no small amount of mortification. His re-appearance awakened in her a reaction of triumphant security and joy, which she displayed by a strange and, to him, highly objectionable line of conduct to him per-

sonally. She became presumptuous, vainglorious of the power she held as she perceived, unchanged over this her greatest conquest. She sought a gratification beyond any she had ever known, in testing to the utmost the extent of her influence over him. But she found that she had made a miscalculation. Lord Lionel was not disposed to be the slave of any woman's caprice. The sincerity of his affection made him invulnerable to such a feminine battery, and strong to withstand her feminine artifices.

Nevertheless his lordship lingered at Florence,—now repelled, now irresistibly reattracted.

CHAPTER XV.

SNAKE IN THE GRASS.

In this crisis of the attachment Miss Mauleverer suffered from a severe attack of indisposition. She remained through the hot summer months in a villa not far from Florence, which was rented by her mother, and when she emerged from her forced seclusion, her appearance betrayed the influence of the fever of the country, combined with a passionate sickness of the heart.

Her mother's health for the last year or two had been delicate, and equally required careful nursing. Near the close of autumn Lord Lionel returned from a tour, and made his way to the villa. The scene he there

beheld affected him deeply. Mrs. Mauleverer's decline was painfully visible on her features; her large dark eyes were riveted with profound anxiety on her daughter, whose delicate figure lay crouched at her feet. The fond mother was murmuring words of tender consolation when Lord Lionel entered the apartment. For a moment he stood unnoticed and unseen, and when with a heart beating high with emotion, he stepped in sight, there was a cry of joyful recognition from the mother's lips. Julia stood up very pale, proud, and composed, and greeted her truant lover with far less agitation than he himself displayed.

For a time they were happy again together, very happy; but for the shadow which Mrs. Mauleverer's ill-health cast upon their content. One more cloud arose before he departed, promising a next day's return, to dim their felicity. Julia's sufferings during his absence, the traces of which were too evident to escape his observation, and the wholesome change produced in her nature, which was conspicuous in spite of all her endeavours to hide it under her usual sparkling vivacity,

now gave him assurances of her truth and love.

Mrs. Mauleverer, in speaking of the seclusion in which they had lately existed, and of all the pleasures Julia had sacrificed for her sake, casually remarked that almost their only visitor had been Lord Vallance, who had kindly come to see them sometimes.

Lord Lionel started perceptibly at the name, and a painful change passed over his face. But he said nothing.

He recalled to mind the first year when Lord Vallance contrived to obtain a footing in Florentine society, and he, Lord Lionel, had carefully avoided contact with a man of such ill repute in his own country. He had been deeply shocked to see him insinuate himself into terms of intimacy with Mrs. and Miss Mauleverer, craftily working his way by attentions to the elder, but still far from unattractive lady, interesting and amusing her by his versatile conversation, whilst he flattered her maternal vanity by his eloquent appreciation of her daughter. The young lady showed herself not entirely indifferent to such marks of attention from the celebrated Irish peer,

who, comparatively elderly as he might be, was a dangerous associate for her.

Lord Lionel had spared no pains to impress this danger upon his thoughtless mistress, and was under the impression that she intended to keep Lord Vallance at a distance.

It was now evident that she had forgotten or disregarded all he had told her, had been beguiled or suffered her mother to be beguiled into admitting this discreditable acquaintance into a confidential intercourse, from which all her friends had been debarred.

"Lord Vallance's reminiscences of his own country," Lord Lionel said at last, in a constrained manner, "I, for one, should have imagined not the most agreeable subject of conversation his lordship could have selected."

Mrs. Mauleverer did not seem to hear the remark. Miss Mauleverer did not pay attention to it. No more was said on the subject, and as the obnoxious nobleman did not present himself at the villa, no further reference was made to him.

CHAPTER XVI.

"ANYTHING BUT THAT."

NOTHING transpired during the weeks that followed to disturb the happiness which marked the intercourse of the acknowledged lovers, and Mrs. Mauleverer seemed to rally beneath the sunshine that illumined the prospects now opening for her beloved daughter.

They were to remain ostensibly at the Villa all the winter, Julia professing herself satiated with the pleasures and gaieties of the Tuscan capital; so the brilliant world of Florence looked in vain for its brightest ornament.

In an evil moment, however, she suffered herself to be lured back into the vortex

which had already proved so dangerous to her. A slight difference which had sprung up between the lovers, a trifle that must have had no influence but for the young beauty's pride and caprice, was permitted to acquire importance and work mischief.

They went to Florence. Mrs. Mauleverer was no longer able to take her customary place in its society with her daughter, but there were other ladies ready to extend to the latter their nominal *chaperonage*.

Of their services she availed herself to the utmost. Never had she been so gay and so brilliant. Perhaps she felt that her day of liberty was hurrying to a close, and she was resolved to have the most enjoyment out of what remained.

Lord Vallance, more agreeable than ever, re-appeared upon her path. He observed the reckless game she was playing. He hated Lord Lionel as much for his personal as for his moral advantages, and resolved to triumph over both. He took his line accordingly. He entered the lists as his rival for the affections of the capricious Julia, delighting in the idea of being able to punish one who

with such cool contempt had stood studiously aloof from his society.

As for the prize, besides the gratification of a selfish passion in obtaining it, it had another value that made it desirable to him. He had understood that Julia would succeed to some property in England, and he believed that she would be her uncle's heiress. Anything like a proper appreciation of womanly attraction, had long died out of Lord Vallance's corrupt nature. His covetous desire had been set on the English fortune, of which, in Italian circles, an exaggerated idea had spread. It was with this brilliant prospect ever in view, that his lordship had insinuated himself into the confidence of the unsuspicious mother.

Lord Vallance had gone down in the world since the time when a few thousands would, it was said, have been but a drop in the ocean of wants. Now a few hundreds were very difficult to procure. His affairs were approaching another crisis, which made some such Godsend almost imperative. Liabilities of different kinds were pressing upon him, and foreign laws do not respect English peerages.

On this contingency he had speculated, when Lord Lionel's apparent abandonment of his pretensions afforded him a chance of securing it after his lordship's first visit to the Villa. But then he had not seen his way sufficiently to show himself openly the lover; in certain circles, however, he did not scruple to insinuate that he was on a very enviable footing with the English heiress, and these assertions he took care should reach Lord Lionel. Julia's thoughtless conduct confirmed the suspicions thus generated, and the lover's fancied security was soon at an end. The spoiled beauty was well aware of the wounds that might be inflicted by the weapon she was carelessly wielding, and recklessly made the most of her skill. Lord Vallance, however, was not a man with whom a woman like Miss Mauleverer could trifle with impunity. He obtained considerable influence over her, which she gradually found herself less able to resist. Her only safeguard lay in the strength of her attachment to Lord Lionel, but this her own folly weakened every day. One triumph more she resolved to make, this was to bring her lover once more to her feet, and then she would be content.

Florence did not suit her mother, even in the now winter month, as well as the pure soft air of the Villa. The physicians recommended a return to it. The daughter eagerly and anxiously acquiesced; yet, lest it might appear a submission on her part to an exacting lover, she resolved that the exciting game she had been lately playing should not be suspended. She most imprudently invited Lord Vallance and one or two more of her admirers whom she had tolerated in her circle, carelessly informing Lord Lionel of the step she had taken—assuming, as a matter of course, that he would join the party. Lord Lionel looked paler than usual when made aware of this defiance of his remonstrances, and then plainly told her that so far from consenting to enter any private dwelling where Lord Vallance visited, he should consider himself bound to avoid it. He demanded, therefore, that the invitation should be cancelled; but the wilful Julia only became more wilful. She could not certainly affront Lord Vallance, she said; and she insisted that Lord Lionel should meet him at her house, as a convincing proof of his devotion to her.

Lord Lionel was firm. He spoke of his affection, of his hopes, his fears, as he never yet had done. He reminded her how much his attachment had been already tried, and how thoroughly assured she must be of his affection. He then took his leave.

Directly afterwards he learned that Lord Vallance had been boasting of the invitation he had received, and of which he exultingly announced his intention to avail himself.

Lord Lionel went to his hotel, and wrote as follows:—

"JULIA,

"The moment has come to decide once for all, whether the now long-tried and ardent attachment which has subsisted on my part, is to endure or to be broken off. Send me back one line to say whether I may safely come to claim you for ever as my wife. In short, assure me, Julia, that Lord Vallance will not be your invited guest. Believe me to remain,

"Yours for ever,

"LIONEL LEIGH."

He received these few lines in return:—

"Julia *commands* this last proof of the attachment you profess. I shall expect you.

"J. M."

The reply angered Lord Lionel more than the original offence. His pride rose in revolt against the woman who could thus trifle with his feelings—could thus withstand his serious remonstrances? Was such a woman, he asked himself, likely to make a safe, a happy, honourable English wife?

Again he wrote:—

"JULIA,

"All is over between us if you persevere. For your own sake, if not for mine, pause and think.

"LIONEL LEIGH."

No answer came to this. He waited anxiously; at last he made inquiries, which convinced him that Lord Vallance had actually become an inmate of the Villa. Then all his affection seemed to die away in a paroxysm of passionate pain.

He did not leave Florence, however, at once, in accordance with his first impulse; he

waited, with some lingering yearning perhaps, for a penitent appeal—a hope of Lord Vallance being speedily dismissed.

But no, the young Italians who had been included in the invitation, returned to Florence enchanted, and one was the bearer of a note, which he presented reverentially to the proud Englishman he found dining at the *recherché caffé*, in which the *élite* of the fashionable world of Florence were also assembled.

He laid it down coldly at first, his heart beating within his breast very wildly, as if it had been of no consequence whatever, instead of being a document on which all his dearest hopes were suspended. He heard some one ask the young man if Lord Vallance had returned with them.

With an expressive shrug he answered—

"No, he was more fortunate; he had been invited to remain—but he being a countryman, that was a matter of course."

Then in the confusion in which heart and brain seemed whirling, Lord Lionel opened the billet with outward calmness, and read—written in that fair, swift Italian hand, the sight of which he loved so well—

"LIONEL,

"Is your love then so weak that you would sacrifice me to a prejudice. I stoop so low as to *entreat*, or eternally parted we indeed shall be. "JULIA."

He scarcely heeded the urgent wording of this appeal. He regarded it as an artifice intended to conquer his resolution. His confidence in the sincerity of her love for him fled for ever.

Just at that moment, too, there came ringing with but too forcible distinctness, in clear Italian accents on his ear, these over-candidly spoken words:—

"Yes! charming, beautiful, graceful, this Signora Giulia I grant, but not the kind of woman exactly one chooses for a wife."

"*No! anything but that!*" a stern English voice responded; and the paper torn quickly into fragments, was consuming in the stove.

That very night Lord Lionel turned his back on Florence and its marble palaces, on his way to England.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE DESPERATE STAKE.

In the meantime Lord Vallance having once more effected an entrance into the delightful residence of his countrywomen, was not slow to discover the advantages of his position, and to avail himself of them to the uttermost. First, he took care to assume the possession of such a claim on the favour of his younger hostess, as might be remarked on and reported by other guests, an assumption which the young lady now found it difficult to ignore.

Then, too, knowing well that his presence there effectually precluded Lord Lionel from entering the field against him, he determined

to stand his ground till his opponent should give up the contest.

Discerning through the charming gaicty of manner with which Miss Mauleverer entertained her guests, the disquietude and misgivings fluttering at her heart, he, under the mask of friendly interest, gained her confidence so far as to learn that an arbitrary prejudice on Lord Lionel's part had created a difference between them. So thorough a man of the world discerned at a glance that the game was in his hands.

"But you will yield now, of course?" was his sneering rejoinder. "Surrender at the eleventh hour—it is your wisest course, believe me."

"But I have not yielded," Julia answered, proudly.

"Ah, well! but it is not too late. A humble letter of apology—of entreaty—a promise to get summarily rid of the chief offender, will bring him to your feet again. I know the sort of man. But Miss Mauleverer must forestall her submission a little—she must bow her head now as low as she will

have to do some day beneath the conjugal yoke."

The defiant spirit of the young beauty shone for an instant in her flashing eyes.

"He will wait very long for that," she said, though even then her heart trembled as she spoke.

Her new friend knew too well how she was circumstanced to allow of her deceiving him as to the real state of her feelings; she had invited him expressly to remain, even whilst the apprehension of a fate she was recklessly drawing on herself dictated the note she sent to Lord Lionel.

She gave her lover two days' grace, at the close of which Lord Vallance, having watched the struggle with close and cruel interest, said with mocking pity in his looks,—

"I may take leave of you now, I suppose? The trial I should imagine may be reckoned complete. You had better have taken my advice—he will not come."

"Till you are gone," she had almost added, but she only said with an attempt at proud security, "No, it is not over; he will yet come."

"You think so?" he replied, looking at her scrutinizingly.

"I do."

"What if I have certain knowledge he will not?"

"No one can have that," she answered, faintly.

"No one, possibly, who knows the matchless Julia; nevertheless, the fact is, the young Visconti has written me word that he delivered your missive to Lord Lionel; that in the public *caffé* he read and destroyed it summarily, with some rather significant and *prononcé* words; and that, that very night, he left Florence, he was heard to say '*for ever!*'"

"I do not believe it," Miss Mauleverer vehemently exclaimed, yet grasping the marble-table, against which she rested, with a hand as white and almost as cold.

"What would you wager with me that this statement is not true?" he asked.

"All, everything!" she answered, recklessly, though a sickening fear began to overpower her judgment. "My life, my happiness,

my trust in all that is sacred in human faith and in human love."

"Are you serious? May I name my stake if in three days from this I prove that I am right?"

"Name it," she said, still recklessly, "what you please."

Then with the look of one feeling certain of his prey, he bent his head close down beside her, and lightly touching the hand still grasping convulsively the slab, he murmured—

"This!"

She started and recoiled instinctively from the touch, but his gaze now fixed upon her face seemed to detain her.

"Let him hear that there is one Englishman at least," he continued, "who would glory in the possession of such a wife. Let us who have been made partners in his insolent disdain, together trample on his prejudices and pride."

"So be it, then," she gasped. "But only three days. He may——"

"You hold yourself cheap," he said, mockingly, "would you wait more than three days for any man?"

"Well, well!" she muttered, in sheer desperation, "if as you say 'tis true, and you feel inclined to take what will be then so little worthy acceptance——"

"Little worthy!" he replied, with an exulting laugh, involuntarily grasping in his eagerness the stake he felt assured that he had won. He pressed the rings upon her slender fingers till she cried out with pain. He quickly apologized, and after a sufficiency of complimentary speeches to atone for his awkwardness, took his leave.

She went and sat down at her mother's feet and waited—waited three days, condensed were into one of horrible suspense and of sickening expectation. When the third was well-nigh over, when all that had been told her was confirmed by the arrival of a packet, which had been sent to their Florence apartments, containing every note or letter she had ever written to Lord Lionel, and a tress of her hair she had lately given him,—when she had laid them before her startled mother, whom she had hitherto spared the anxiety of knowing the risk she had voluntarily accepted by receiving Lord Vallance; when she had

finally displayed to her that dark silken token, she remembered the reckless wager she had made. In the bitterness of her despair she determined that the forfeit should be paid.

She paced the room with frantic anguish, rapidly making up her mind to fling herself blindly on her destiny. Hateful as such an union was to her, the bitterer vengeance would it prove for the cruel abandonment she had been obliged to endure. So she told her mother what had hitherto been concealed from her.

Mrs. Mauleverer was astonished, frightened, and dismayed. Lord Vallance had gained an influence over her mind also; she was dazzled by his rank, and had been imposed on by his agreeable manners. Her great anxiety had long been caused by her apprehension of dying suddenly, and leaving her brilliant daughter unprotected. A peer in her mind seemed a *parti* eligible in the highest degree. He was not rich, she knew; for his lordship had frankly acknowledged his deficiency of fortune to be the reason of his residing so constantly abroad; but he lived

le grand Seigneur, nevertheless, and bore about him the prestige of one with whom poverty has nothing to do.

But Lord Lionel had disappeared. There was some cloud upon Lord Vallance's name she had heard, but she knew nothing about it. She thought him very agreeable, but he was old; and it was Lord Lionel that her daughter loved—Lord Lionel, to whom she herself had hoped to commit her child, without one doubt, one shadow of foreboding for her future fate.

The fond mother's heart sunk low at this disappointment—but she must submit. She feared Julia was misled by the excited feeling under which she often acted. She was, however, accustomed to yield blind submission to the judgment of a daughter whom her imagination almost worshipped.

As if to place Miss Mauleverer's imprudence beyond remedy, there came next day not Lord Vallance himself, but a letter from him, claiming her promise as his now acknowledged due, and announcing his intention of arriving in two days—this interval he suggested should be employed in preparations for the marriage, which he desired should take place without delay.

He made no entreaty as to her consent to this summary proceeding, but at once laid as it were a firm grasp on what he had won.

As he had shrewdly calculated, this was just the course which, in Miss Mauleverer's desperate mood, was certain to prevail. To be treated, probably for the first time in her life, with a high, unscrupulous hand, took her by surprise. She attempted no resistance. She began in a stunned and almost passive spirit to make preparations. She was to be ready to accompany Lord Vallance at a certain hour on the day he stated.

She merely stipulated that the next day after the marriage she might return to her mother. To prevent any filial objections, Lord Vallance acquiesced. It would be advisable, indeed, he added, to keep their marriage secret at first, for reasons he could afterwards explain. He made no allusion whatever to any settlement or arrangement of her property. Julia was dead to all considerations of the kind, and Mrs. Mauleverer, in her enfeebled state, if anxious thoughts disturbed her mind upon the subject, seemed unequal to any interference.

The bearer of Lord Vallance's letter was an Italian servant, who announced that he had received orders to remain and make himself of use to the ladies, if they did not object.

At any other time Julia might have resented such an intrusion, but now she let it pass with the rest, and failed to mark the freedom with which the valet fulfilled his instructions, which were to institute a strict *surveillance* over Miss Mauleverer.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE BIRD ENSNARED.

THE fated day at last arrived.

In the morning Lord Vallance came in a hired carriage, which he left at the entrance gate of the Villa, where his servant met him, and received his further orders, and Julia, from the window of the room in which her mother sat, watched her bridegroom as he slowly ascended the winding acclivity, lined with luxuriant shrubs, that led to the house.

There was a cold, cutting wind even in the genial south that winter's morning, and his lordship wore one of the white thick overcoats, the fashion in England at that time. There was certainly something aristocratic in

his appearance, but his bearing, as he thus advanced, unconscious of observation, his large slouching form, and his hirsute visage, contrasted unfavourably with the open countenance and the erect and graceful figure for which the young beauty had been accustomed to watch.

Hastily she left the window, knelt beside her mother, and clasping her knees, exclaimed wildly—

"Mamma! he is come. I cannot do it. At this eleventh hour I must retract."

Mrs. Mauleverer gazed at her agitated child, marvelling how she had contrived to maintain unnatural calmness till this moment.

Presently she rose hurriedly to her feet, as Lord Vallance entered. He embraced her with a more studied courtesy than warmth of affection. She was cold and pale. Mrs. Mauleverer gazed on both with painful solicitude.

"All ready, I am rejoiced to find," he said; then addressing his future mother-in-law with an affectation of gallantry, he assured her that their absence need be but short, and that she should have her charming daughter back very soon.

"To-morrow, dearest mamma, to-morrow," Julia murmured, distressed by her mother's evident excitement. She passionately threw her arms once more round her, but Mrs. Mauleverer put her gently from her.

"Leave us for a moment, my darling," she said. "I cannot have my child thus torn from me, without a word in private to your future husband. Lord Vallance, I must speak with you alone."

Lord Vallance, though he looked by no means willing, could not refuse so natural a request.

Julia left them together.

"Lord Vallance," she said, "may I see my child depart, confident that you will secure her happiness—that I am committing her safely into your hands—that when I leave this world (as I feel I must very shortly) I may take with me the happy conviction that she is provided with a life-long protector, and a most tender friend?"

"My dear Madam, can you doubt it?" Lord Vallance replied, "who can be so sure to realize such an idea as a husband?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Mauleverer, looking at

him earnestly, "I trust I may rest satisfied. I could have wished, indeed, it had not been quite so sudden . . . . that more time had been given . . . . for Julia——

She hesitated.

"To recover from her former attachment; to make more sure of her more desirable lover's non-intention to return."

"My dear Madam," he continued with almost undisguised sarcasm, "you may make your mind easy on these points. '*La donna é mobile*,' is a proverb, and your fascinating daughter's attachments, you should know by this time, are not of the most deep-rooted character. As for Lord Lionel Leigh and his intentions, he declared his sentiments and opinions too publicly and decidedly on the subject, to leave any doubt concerning them. Believe me, I am pursuing for Julia the kindest and safest course."

Mrs. Mauleverer sighed. There was something in Lord Vallance's tone that tended rather to increase than soothe her misgivings.

"Then her worldly interests, my dear Lord Vallance," she continued, anxiously. "You

have surely thought of her little fortune. Should not something have been done—some settlement—some security have been provided that she should retain what she is entitled to? I know that my kinsman has made a will in her favour; and such expectations, I think, ought not to be interfered with."

"There need be no anxiety on that account," Lord Vallance answered impatiently, "her interests, of course, are mine. Allow me, therefore," he added, looking at his watch, "to recall your daughter; we have no further time to lose."

Mrs. Mauleverer was weaker than usual that morning; she now sunk back helplessly on the couch.

"And alone," she impatiently gasped, as Julia reappeared; "this is very strange and unnatural."

"Nay, Mamma, it is nothing," she murmured soothingly. "It is only till to-morrow, when I shall be with you once more."

Lord Vallance suffering no further delay, took possession of his bride's arm, and without

risking the effect of another parting embrace, led her quickly away.

They were singularly unattended indeed. Even Antonio did not accompany the carriage —the bride afterwards learnt—but was sent on to prepare for their arrival at Florence.

This inauspicious marriage was celebrated as English Protestant marriages are too often managed on the Continent, but in addition, with a suspicious mystery; after which the bride and bridegroom repaired to an apartment Lord Vallance rented in addition to his more fashionable Florentine residence—in an old desolate *palazzo* in an obscure suburb of the city, where Antonio again appeared to receive them.

They had scarcely, however, arrived there when there commenced a series of events that frustrated all Lord Vallance's designs, whatever they may have been. In the first place his lordship was arrested for debt and carried off to prison; the next was the arrival that morning of the bride's uncle, who having, with the assistance of the police, traced out her place of concealment, brought her back to her mother. His interposition did not end

here. Mrs. Mauleverer had sent a brief intimation of her daughter's hasty nuptials, and the wealthy wine-grower, knowing a good deal more of the noble bridegroom than his correspondent, at once left his vineyard with the determination to put a stop to the projected union. He arrived in Florence too late for this, but not too late to rescue his beautiful kinswoman from an equivocal position. He felt sure that there was something wrong in the whole affair, but till he could unravel the mystery he thought it most prudent that his relatives should be in a place of safety. He, therefore, continued with them, till they were in the first steamer that left the nearest port for England, then returned to Florence to prosecute his inquiries into the antecedents of Lord Vallance with the object of annulling the marriage.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE GORDIAN KNOT.

It is now easy to understand the state of bewilderment into which Lord Lionel Leigh was thrown by the unexpected appearance of Julia Mauleverer, of whose marriage he was of course ignorant, but a few months after their disunion, in a corner of the world the least likely apparently to produce such a contingency.

Was it to be wondered that he should have hesitated to acknowledge to the young lady by whom he had been since accepted, or to any of her family, this object of a deep and recent attachment? Yet conscientiously, except so far as he may have erred in the

matter of concealment, Lord Lionel acted under the trying circumstances.

His intended possessed every quality desirable in a wife. All the better feelings of his nature, which this new affection was calculated to call forth, were in process of development, when the object of his first feverish passion came as it seemed to destroy his happiness.

He had wished to forget her; rumours had followed him to England as to what had succeeded his departure from Florence, and though he resolutely shut his convictions against them, enough was suggested to render him uneasy and irritable on the subject.

How he endured the ordeal, has been seen, of his—to say the least—difficult and embarrassing situation, rendered the more so by his betrothed's timid discouragement of his confidence. Then the crisis came of the disclosure of the young lady's true position, and pity over, Lord Lionel felt a wonderful access of strength. The wife of Lord Vallance, whether free or not, receded as far from his former consideration of her as when the worst suspicions rested on her fame.

Remaining, as she must ever do, the buried passion of his life, sometimes haunting his dreams, in darker moments troubling his content, he found it impossible to associate her with the pure, sweet name of wife. This name he could connect only with Henrietta Drelincourt.

Misgivings would occasionally oppress his mind respecting their intimacy. The letters he received from his betrothed had been short and few; indeed the last had stated that, his return being so uncertain, and his time apparently so taken up, she would suspend the correspondence.

Lord Lionel, however, after the first few days, had written regularly and fully.

Lady Vallance's case was not advancing. There were difficulties and delays at first owing to the peculiar circumstances under which the marriage was contracted affording little that the law could interfere with. Her desire for a dissolution of the tie so hateful to her could not be gratified. It was the legal opinion that a mutual arrangement might be accomplished.

So Lord Lionel thought of returning, having

fulfilled the pledge of assistance he had given. He had seen Lady Vallance only in presence of his solicitors.

So she lived from day to day in feverish suspense and restless solitude, tantalized with glimpses of the happiness she had lost, learning the impressive lesson of "too late," which Lord Lionel's conduct was designed to teach her; and resigning herself to any fate, rather than the one from which she was striving to escape.

Lord Vallance was still lying at the Grange. So far from having shaken off his feverish attack, or progressing towards recovery, symptoms of a very serious nature had appeared, giving evidence of the incapacity of his shattered constitution to make head against any formidable disorder.

Ferdinand Stoughton, who still daily visited him, and Mr. Drelincourt from what he heard of the case, began to consider the propriety of getting further advice.

CHAPTER XX.

A BYE-STREET IN BELGRAVIA.

When the Reverend Septimus left his fair and interesting parishioner, he first caused himself to be driven to the Grosvenor Hotel, where he engaged a sleeping apartment during his stay in town, then having taken some refreshment in the magnificent coffee room, he strolled out in the direction of Pimlico, a neighbourhood with which he was perfectly familiar.

He proceeded at a slow pace, looking about him and recognizing a multitude of old familiar faces, till he came to a bye-street near the principal squares, that seemed by the number of bills in the parlour windows to be

almost exclusively devoted to lodging letting. At one of these small unpretending houses, he ascended the door-step, put his hand in his waistcoat pocket, drew out a latch-key, applied it to an almost invisible orifice in the door, and turned it. The door opened and he entered a narrow hall or passage covered with oil-cloth a little the worse for wear, a lamp was suspended from an arch in the ceiling, and the only other furniture was a small umbrella-stand, a mahogany hall-bench and a weather-glass.

The reverend gentleman, as he recognized the well-known objects, that looked as if they had not been touched during his absence, closed the street-door softly, and with a pleasant smile opened an inner door with one hand, as he took off his hat with the other.

"Goodness gracious! Mamma!"

"Well! this *is* a surprise, Clarissa!"

The gentleman stood in the door-way, visible to two ladies who sat on opposite sides of a Pembroke table, engaged in needle work. A work-box with fragments of coloured print, lay upon the table, and on the chairs as well

as on the floor were articles of wearing apparel, made of the cheapest fabrics. The room was neatly furnished with horse hair chairs and sofa; a Brussels carpet of a drab pattern covered the floor, and a few prints, exclusively of a religious character, decorated the walls. In the ornaments on the marble-chimney piece there appeared a curious mingling of the genteel and the pious,—fashionable vases flanked a money-box for charitable donations, and Parian statuettes of angels with very extensive wings and seraphic draperies overlooked a china shepherd and shepherdess in the conventional costume of Arcadia. Their reflections were seen in the mirror before which they stood, except near the frame, where a long line of visiting cards hid a portion of the glass.

The only occupants of the room were—a tall elderly old lady, very primly dressed in black merino, having a long black jet row of beads ending in a cross, and a tall elderly young lady, very primly dressed in exactly the same costume, with the addition of a long steel *chatelaine* suspended from her waist. The elderly old lady's face was wrinkled, and

her hair was grey, but the face was cheerful, if not intelligent; that of the elderly young lady was meagre and wan, and, notwithstanding a perpetual simper, had rather a sour expression.

Miss Bootles had long been on the list of old maids; but since she discovered that her celibacy was fixed and unalterable, she thought proper voluntarily to assume the character of a vestal. Mrs. Bootles was a widow of a manager, who having left her pretty comfortably off, she had taken a small house in Belgravia, part of which she let to unexceptionable tenants during the season; but her ambition was to connect herself—in religion at least—with "Good Society." Her daughter cherished similar aspirations, and made the acquaintance of the principal clergymen in the district; under their auspices, assisted in Sunday-school tuition, ragged-school tuition, prayer meetings, Bible readings, and any other good work in which her gratuitous services could be rendered available for Church purposes.

Miss Clarissa did not appear to have altered in the very slightest degree since the Reverend Septimus had been one of the curates of that

district, so peculiarly favoured by the *élite* of "Good Society." There were identically the same whitey-brown curls, in the same number, and of the same length, still suspended on each side of the tall elderly young lady's pallid face and scraggy neck; there was the same long sharp nose, the same dim grey eyes he had been familiar with; there was the same back-comb and ugly top-knot, the same shell-cameo brooch, with a head of St. Cecilia, he had looked upon so many hundred times before.

With his predilection for certain forms of mediæval art, the face of Miss Bootles was not likely to be a gratifying study; nevertheless, the Curate of Middlecombe-Regis stood on the threshold of the well-remembered parlour as if the sight of that tall young lady was exceedingly refreshing to him, after the females he had been obliged to associate with since he had held his country curacy. If this was not the case, Miss Clarissa thought it was, and simpered and did her best to blush in recognition of the compliment.

"I have the honour of paying my respects to my once respected parishioners," said their

clerical visitor, making a low bow. "I have only just arrived in town, and they are the first persons I have called upon."

"How good of you, Mr. Fairholme!" exclaimed the mother, in accents of exaggerated gratification, which showed a large familiarity with the acting drama. "But then you were always so good to us, you know. Do come and sit down."

Miss Clarissa removed a heap of coarse flannel shirts from the chair nearest her, and the Curate of Middlecombe-Regis walked towards it, and seated himself on the horse-hair cushion.

"It is so pleasant to be amongst true Christians," observed that gentleman, scanning the signs of industry with which the room was littered. "You are always well employed, Miss Clarissa. For the poor, I have no doubt."

"I have been appointed honorary secretary to the South Pimlico Ragged-School," replied Miss Bootles, with a slight assumption of pride; "and I have been getting up a subscription, to elevate the best boys into the proud position of a shoe-black brigade. The

things you see about the room are for their outfit."

"Yes, Mr. Fairholme, Clarissa and I went from house to house, soliciting subscriptions for the ragged-school boys, and meeting with rebuffs from the ungodly, and neglect from the lukewarm; but we persevered, and have been able to carry out our plan as far as clothing three boys for following the profession the committee have so judiciously selected for them."

The speech was said with a dignity that could only have been obtained from long study of the legitimate drama.

"It is a beginning," observed the clergyman, encouragingly. "No doubt it will lead to greater results."

"So the dear Count said," observed Mrs. Bootles.

"A new acquaintance—a neighbour, perhaps," suggested their reverend friend.

"Oh! dear no. Count Zullewski does not live in this neighbourhood. I think I heard him say he had lodgings for the benefit of the country air somewhere in the suburbs."

"Yes, mamma, the Count has apartments in Kentish Town."

"Zullewski!" cried the Curate, in a mild form of astonishment. "Is he a Pole?"

"Yes, a Polish patriot, whom the Russian Czar would give thousands of roubles to lay hold of, for the purpose of having him knouted to death. The Count is a great man in his own country, and was a General in the army, and won ever so many battles against the Russians, so that the Emperor spitefully prevents his tenants from sending him their rents. He is therefore obliged to endure a good many privations. Indeed, to tell you the truth, Mr. Fairholme, I think the only meal the poor Count gets in the four-and-twenty hours, is the one he eats when he comes here,—for he usually calls about dinner-time."

Mrs. Bootles spoke with that confidence which long experience of the prompter alone can give.

"I cannot say I ever heard of this distinguished foreigner," said the Curate, innocently. "But you know I have not been much in the way of Polish Counts. How did you make his acquaintance, Miss Bootles?"

"O! the most natural way in the world. I was coming out of chapel, when a gentleman

with a remarkable fine head of hair and large moustache stepped up to me, begged my pardon in the sweetest of broken English, and requested permission to restore a "*mouchoir*" which he had seen drop from my hand."

"Then we thanked him," added the mother, "and he walked on with us, talking of the service we had heard, praising the clergyman and the congregation by turns, and professing that he had never been so edified before in any place of worship, whether in England or on the Continent. He entered into a highly interesting description of the grand ceremonials both of the Latin and Greek Churches he had witnessed, till we came to our door, Then, as he was in the midst of a most picturesque account of a sacred festival that had been celebrated on his extensive estates in Poland, we could not do less than ask him in. He accepted our invitation in the politest manner imaginable, gave us his card, with his name engraved under a coronet, as evidence of his respectability, and sat down in our parlour, where he continued chatting in the most affable manner till dinner-time.

"We of course invited the Count to share

our cutlets, hardly dreaming, however, that he would do us that honour, but again he accepted our invitation most affably, and amused us with an account of the immense herds of cattle, almost in a wild state, that existed on his extensive estates. He seemed to like the cutlets very much, for he ate nearly the whole of them.

"After dinner, the Count, in the most amiable way, continued to entertain us with his recollections of foreign courts till tea-time. He accepted tea with the same affability he had accepted dinner. In short, the Count remained conversing in his dear delightful broken English, about Emperors, and Kings, and Princes, and Princesses, till near midnight, when, with a thousand apologies, and a most polite request to be permitted to call and inquire after our health occasionally, he took his leave."

It was well known in the theatrical world that no one ever had a finer "study" than Mrs. Bootles.

"And has he called every day since?" asked the visitor.

"Every day the dear Count has made his appearance, and is always equally entertaining."

"But have you not made any inquiries respecting him?"

"Oh, Mr. Fairholme, how could we?" exclaimed the daughter. "Nothing can be more evident than that he has moved in the very highest society."

"Of course we couldn't think of hurting his feelings by asking for references, as if he came as a lodger."

"He seems to have come as a boarder," observed their clerical friend, with a smile.

"Well, it is so pleasant to hear the Count talk of Warsaw, and St. Petersburg, and Vienna, and Paris, where he has always moved in the Court circles, that one cannot withhold one's hospitality. And he is very good-natured. Seems perfectly satisfied with cold meat and salad; and was even quite cheerful upon pork-sausages and pancakes."

Mrs. Bootles did not state the whole truth respecting the Count Theodore Zullewski's condescension. Besides accepting the good lady's hospitality, he had accepted still more friendly services with the same charming affability; but of these she had not thought it necessary to inform her daughter.

Nor had Miss Clarissa been perfectly ingenuous with her clerical friend, for with equal privacy the dear Count had laid himself under the like obligations; but these had remained a secret from her mamma.

The Curate did not think it necessary to say anything more on the subject. He was very far from being worldly-wise, but he did not consider that he was justified in remonstrating with his old friends on the familiar footing in which he found them with a person of whom they knew nothing except from his own representations.

The talk proceeded fluently upon Church matters, schools, infirmaries, and all the charitable institutions of the important and fashionable district; the ladies contributing a liberal amount of gossip respecting the new Curate, and certain practices which had lately been permitted to transpire through the interference of an intractable churchwarden, against whom both mother and daughter were highly indignant.

"I think it would be much better for him if he would mind his own business," observed Mrs. Bootles. "For my part I have no

patience with meddling churchwardens. What the Incumbent thinks proper, the churchwarden ought to think proper. What's the candlesticks to him, I should like to know? or the candles either? He doesn't pay for them! If the congregation are content with an altar instead of a credence table, he isn't called upon to interfere."

Nothing in genteel comedy had ever been better expressed.

"Certainly not," added Miss Bootles. "I'm surprised at the man thrusting himself forward so indelicately in sacred matters. The laity ought to leave spiritual things to spiritual persons. But it is easily seen what his object is. He is a tradesman, and thinks it a good way of advertising his shop."

"He would wait long enough before I went into it," said the mamma. "If there was not another place of the kind within a dozen miles I wouldn't patronize him, for I'm sure he can't be any better than a heathen."

"Of course he's an infidel, and reads Tom Paine, and Voltaire, and Strauss, and writers of that stamp. By the way, Mr. Fairholme, did you ever hear anything like the pro-

ceedings of that wicked Bishop Colenso? Why he's worse than Darwin! My hair stands on end when I venture to read the horrid things that are suffered to appear in print. How the Church of England contrives to stand against such desperate assaults I cannot imagine. And now that we have enemies in the camp, treacherous bishops and troublesome churchwardens, I really am afraid that that glorious institution must be overthrown."

"There is no real cause for alarm, Miss Bootles," replied the Curate, as soon as he found an opening. "The Church has come victorious out of much more terrible conflicts than the one in which she is now engaged. I am not at all uneasy about the Reformed Church, so long as its ministers do their duty fearlessly."

"Ah! Mr. Fairholme, you always brought us comfort," observed the mother, as she rose from her seat, and walked out of the room, with the majestic stride for which she had once been famous.

As soon as the Curate of Middlecombe-Regis and Miss Bootles were left alone, the

fluent conversation slackened perceptibly, and presently came to a dead pause.

"Shall I confess to you?" asked the young lady, with the meekest look and voice possible.

"No thank you, Miss Bootles," replied her companion quietly. "My Bishop does not approve of auricular confession."

"I always confess to Mr. Corbel," said the other in a tone and with a look of disappointment, "and he always gives me absolution."

"With that I have nothing to do. You are his parishioner, not mine."

Miss Bootles put on an air of injured innocence. The fact was she liked confessing. The enumeration of a few harmless peccadilloes did not give her much trouble, and the kneeling down at the feet of a gentleman, was a pleasant novelty, though of course she would rather their relative positions were reversed.

"The Reverend Mr. Corbel takes my confession every week," she repeated, "and invariably grants me absolution."

"I've no doubt of it, Miss Bootles," was the reply. "But you must really excuse me following that gentleman's example."

The Honorary Secretary of the South Pimlico Ragged-School felt that she could not contest the point. She, however, with evident reluctance gave up the idea of repeating an interesting exhibition for the edification of her former spiritual adviser.

At this moment the door was opened, and a shabbily-dressed man, with his face almost concealed by a large growth of hair, entered the room. He started when he observed a gentleman seated by the side of Miss Bootles; that young lady flushed when she recognized her visitor.

"Mr. Fairholme," she exclaimed, as she rose from her seat, "allow me to have the honour of introducing you to the Count Theodore Zullewski. Count, the Reverend Mr. Fairholme."

The clergyman rose and bowed to the stranger, but a glance at his well-worn hat, his buttoned-up coat, his hardly-used boots, and more than all, his keen sinister grey eyes, restrained any more friendly demonstration. The Count bowed however very low, and appeared exceedingly gratified by the introduction.

He broke out into transports of gratitude to his amiable friend Miss Bootles, for causing him to be so fortunate as to be made known to so distinguished a clergyman, and he said that when he was restored to his estates he should be delighted to show how greatly he honoured any one who enjoyed the advantage of an introduction from his amiable friend.

"Is there any prospect of that event taking place?" inquired Mr. Fairholme, with a grave look.

"Undoubtedly, reverend sir," was the reply. "If I would only make certain promises to the Emperor of Russia, I might go back to Poland to-morrow."

"I hope then you may be able to make them with as little delay as possible."

"Oh, it would be against my principles," exclaimed the exile. "I am a Polish patriot, and a Polish patriot never sacrifices his principles for any temptation whatever."

Miss Bootles smiled triumphantly, but her smile almost immediately vanished, as she observed another man stealthily opening the door. He was dressed like a respectable

mechanic in his Sunday suit. His face was clean shaved, without a particle of beard or whisker, and it bore a look of remarkable shrewdness and audacity. His sharp glance rested on the figure before him, and he stood still, closing the door softly behind him.

The exile turned sharply at the sound, and when his gaze met that of the person by whom he had been followed, he uttered a cry, and seemed as much alarmed as if he thought the figure supernatural.

"Now Smith," cried the last comer, familiarly, "your game's up, and you're wanted."

"You must be labouring under some great mistake, sir," said Miss Bootles, "this gentleman is the Count Theodore Zullewski."

"Is he, ma'am!" replied the intruder. "Well, I intend to take him into custody as Bill Smith, *alias* Perkins, *alias* Johnson, *alias* 'the Downey One,' *alias* the Honourable Captain Fitz-Howard, *alias* Count Zullewski. So come along, Smith, you're wanted about them forged bank-notes."

His captor, apparently a serjeant of police, grasped the exile by the inside of his arm,

and led him out of the room into the street before Miss Bootles had recovered from her astonishment.

"What's going to be done to the dear Count?" inquired Mrs. Bootles, rushing into the room. "It's that horrid Czar, I dare say, has had him seized."

Mr. Fairholme informed her of the scene he had witnessed, and made her aware of the extent of her credulity. She seemed to realize the deception with the greatest possible difficulty.

"It can't be! There must be a mistake!" she cried, theatrically, more than once, during the narrative. "The Count's resources are very low, I am aware, but many Polish exiles are in a similar condition."

"O, mamma!" exclaimed Miss Bootles, "my gold watch stopped, and he asked me yesterday to let him take it to a countryman of his, who would set it to rights without charging me anything. Of course I let him have it."

"Good gracious!"

"And he borrowed my gold chain a week ago to have it lengthened, and promised to

bring it back at least an inch longer, without its costing me a sixpence."

"Good gracious!"

"And he has asked from me, at various times, for taking invaluable heir-looms out of pledge, as much as seven pounds fifteen shillings and sixpence in money."

"Good gracious!"

Mr. Fairholme tried to console the sufferer, but he quickly ascertained that she had not been the only victim. Various articles of plate had been obtained from the mother, ostensibly to have her initials engraved upon them for nothing; and other sums of money had been borrowed of her for the purpose of preserving "the family diamonds" from forfeiture.

It was late before the Curate of Middlecombe-Regis was able to make his *adieux* to his old friends, but he did not do so without expressing a few words of good advice to both ladies respecting their want of caution in associating with people they knew nothing about.

CHAPTER XXI.

PREACHING AND ARCHITECTURE AS PATRONIZED BY "GOOD SOCIETY."

On quitting the bye-street in Belgravia, the Reverend Septimus Fairholme passed towards Sloane Square, and then proceeded along the west side of Sloane Street. He soon became aware that a large majority of the pedestrians in this thoroughfare were proceeding in the same direction, till he came to a turning when they left the street. A feeling of curiosity induced him to follow, for amongst the throng he noticed some ladies who had formerly been known to him when he acted as curate in the neighbouring parish.

Presently he came to the door of a chapel,

that he well knew to be a Roman Catholic one, into which the people he had followed disappeared. He was going to turn back when he noticed a printed announcement on the wall that bore a familiar name. It told him that the Rev. Emanuel Mordecate would preach a sermon there at the very hour now about to commence.

The Curate of Middlecombe-Regis knew that his former tutor had become a fashionable preacher to Roman Catholic congregations, so he was not surprised at the crowd of well-dressed persons he saw thronging into the chapel. He felt a great desire to hear him; and, immediately acting on this feeling, ascended the steps, and while those who were preceding him were waiting to cross themselves with the holy water placed in the usual receptacle, he passed through the inner door, and entered the sacred edifice, only a few minutes before the service commenced.

That interval gave him time to notice the painted window, the decorated altar, the ornamentation of the structure, the pulpit, the organ, and the crowded congregation, three-fourths of whom were ladies very fashionably

dressed. He was surprised to discover among them so many faces that had formerly been seen in the female portion of his own congregation. Some of them smiled upon him in recognition, or as if they were particularly glad to see him with them again, though under such very different circumstances.

He had often, when abroad, been a spectator of the service of the Romish Church, so there was nothing of novelty in it to him. Indeed its attractive features had, one by one, been introduced into the service of the Pimlico mediæval chapel to which he had been attached, so that if there was any cause for surprise, it must have been in observing the numerous points of resemblance which the Popish bore to the Protestant form of worship. He could not help coming to the conclusion that there was really very little difference between the two ceremonials. The Latin prayers of the breviary certainly differed from the English ritual; but of these, both services retained several that were alike in everything except language.

The Curate saw no just reason, therefore, why he should not join in these devotions

with a sincere and earnest spirit, and was as devout as any of the congregation. The singing was very good—better, he thought, even than the best display of the kind that had been got up in his own choir on certain grand occasions, when extra vocalists had been engaged—vocalists, he had since thought, who might very well have been left to their ordinary avocations, for he could not appreciate the talent that displayed itself with equal effect in the morning in the *Te Deum* at the mediæval chapel, and over-night in "Glorious Apollo" at the Cider Cellar.

At last the preacher took his place in the pulpit, and the Curate recognized his Oxford friend; very shortly afterwards his Oxford friend, he fancied, recognized him. He preached extemporaneously, with great command of language, and with remarkable fervour. It was certainly a most powerful discourse, and riveted the attention of his auditory from first to last,—the fashionable ladies in particular appearing, as it were, to hang upon every word that fell from his lips.

The main subject of the sermon was what the preacher called "the transition state of the

Church of England," and the preacher brought forward so startling a statement of the gradual conversion of Protestants of that denomination, that Mr. Fairholme was rather taken by surprise. He had heard many statements of the same nature, but had regarded them as gross exaggerations; but when a declaration of this kind was delivered from the pulpit, he could not venture to doubt its correctness.

The appearance in that chapel of many Protestants of the Tractarian body, countenanced, if it did not corroborate such assertions. The Curate did not take into consideration the probability of many of the present congregation having, like himself, joined it from curiosity, and the attraction to High Church religious ladies of a handsome and intellectual preacher, whose antecedents were said to be of a romantic, even of a mysterious character.

Some part of the discourse seemed to be specially delivered for the Curate's benefit, for it dwelt with vivid force on the difficulties of conscientious Protestants whose associations prevented their acting upon their convictions. But a little reflection ought to have satisfied

Mr. Fairholme that his Oxford tutor was appealing to all his heretical hearers who had not yet abandoned their "heresy."

From this subject the preacher easily glided to a consideration of the state of the Romish Church, which he painted in most glowing colours. Had his words been dipped in the rainbow before the picture they presented was recognized by the imagination of his attentive congregation, they could not have had a brighter or more encouraging effect. The old Catholics were delighted with such eloquence, the new Catholics were enraptured with it, and the Protestants were quite as sensible of its charm. He could not have looked over the faces—many of them possessed of high pretensions to beauty—that were turned towards him, without being satisfied that he had gained not only their attention, but their sympathies.

Then in a masterly manner he referred to the position of the Pontiff, as suffering from the ambition of bad men, and dwelt on the Divine favour which had been manifested to the possessor of the keys of St. Peter in the most troublous times. He maintained that

such a church, so supported, must stand for ever, even if the powers of darkness should be leagued against it. There could be nothing to fear if those who enjoyed the inestimable privilege of belonging to the only infallible and indestructible Church, would show how they valued their blessings, by contributing to the utmost of their power to the great work then in hand, the restoration of England to the favour of the Holy See.

There was a collection to follow the sermon, and the preacher took care to make his appeal to the purse as strong as had been his appeal to the feelings. What was the necessity that called for so powerful an advocate the Curate did not learn, but he soon saw that the advocacy had not been in vain. The old Catholics gave liberally to set a good example, the new Catholics followed it to show that they were sincere in their professions, and the wavering Protestants did their utmost in the same direction to prove, perhaps, that their hold on their money was not firmer than that on their faith.

Mr. Fairholme was tnrning to leave the building when one of the acolytes, who had

assisted in the service, came up to him, and told him that the Reverend Mr. Mordecate wished to see him. He followed the youth into the sacristy, or some such portion of the edifice, where he found his old tutor unrobing.

"Ah, Fairholme!" the latter exclaimed joyfully, holding out his hand, "I knew you'd come. Men of your stamp don't take long to make up their minds, when they are satisfied that they are in a false position."

The Curate of Middlecombe-Regis shook hands with his old tutor, though with perhaps not quite so much cordiality as his old tutor desired.

"I was coming by the chapel," he said quietly, "saw your name, and could not resist the inclination I felt to listen to a preacher of whom I had heard and read so much."

"Thanks, my dear Fairholme. But I do not think you quite do justice to your inclinations. I fancy they had a higher elevation than the preacher?"

"I am not aware of it," replied the Curate, affecting not to understand his friend's meaning.

"Allow me to introduce you to my dear and reverend friend, Dr. Dermott, Professor of Divinity in the Catholic University of Ireland. Doctor, my old college friend, the Reverend Septimus Fairholme."

The Curate became aware of the presence of a tall portly figure, clad in sacerdotal vestments, with rather a jovial physiognomy and vivacious black eyes. He wore the tonsure; indeed he was the Superior of a religious house in the neighbourhood of Dublin.

"It's mighty proud I am to make your acquaintance, sir, as a friend of Brother Emanuel!" exclaimed the Irish priest, giving the stranger an Hibernian shake of the hand. "And if you should get as far as the capital of ould Ireland, if ye'll only be afther calling at the Abbey, and asking for the Father Superior—which is just myself, and nobody else at all at all, I'll go bail ye'll not have to complain of Irish hospitality."

The Curate of Middlecombe-Regis expressed his thanks in a becoming manner, and regretted very much that he saw no prospect at present of a visit to the sister island,

though he had long been most desirous of seeing that interesting country.

"Intheresting country!" cried the good father, as if his heart expanded at the sound of anything like praise of Ireland. "There's no place in the world that bates it for that—barring, of course, Rome and the Holy Land. And to be sure it has claims to rival both, for it's the land of saints, it is; and the birth-place of St. Patrick, glory be to God! And, in short, it's the blessedest place, altogether, it's possible for an Irishman to be born in!"

"I quite agree with you, Dr. Dermott," said the Protestant clergyman, with a smile.

"O! if I had you there now, my dear Mr. Fairholme, wouldn't I show you the Lakes of Killarney, that bate everything in the shape of scenery, Italian or Swiss, into smithereens! And wouldn't I show you the beautiful Vale of Avoca, that would have been the Garden of Eden had our first parents been allowed to pick and choose a Paradise for themselves! And if ye like a bolder landscape, wouldn't I show ye the most iligant mountains ever created! It's all mighty well to talk about

Alps and Apennines, but in my humble opinion, Mr. Fairholme, they ain't fit to hold a candle to the mountains of Connemara!"

"My friend, Dr. Dermott," observed the Reverend Emanuel to his college friend, "is as you see an enthusiast in Irish scenery; and if I let him go on, now he has got upon so genial a theme, he will be sure to keep us here till midnight, by the spell of his eloquence excited by the stimulus of his nationality. I must be more considerate for you, as I know that your time in town is very limited, and you, most probably, have urgent business elsewhere. I have no doubt, however, that you and Dr. Dermott will become better acquainted. As for myself I trust I shall soon find an opportunity of renewing our confidential communications on a certain topic. I shall very shortly be in your neighbourhood. Please to recommend me to your sister."

The Curate took his leave of the two priests with many courteous apologies from Dr. Dermott for having detained him, and was presently quietly wending his way in the direction of Knightsbridge, which having

reached, he continued his walk along Piccadilly. He proceeded straight on till he arrived at one of the most fashionable streets, into which he turned. It was a long thoroughfare of shops, that exhibited the most costly and tasteful fabrics, expensive objects of art, and luxuries of every description.

Stopping at a door on which there was a name-plate containing the inscription "CROCKETT and FINIAL, Architects," he rang one of several side-bells, and plied the knocker with considerable force. After an interim that taxed his patience severely, the door was opened by a tall lad in a kind of livery, which he was rapidly out-growing, supposing it possible that it had ever fitted him. The cuffs of the many buttoned jacket were nearly half up to his elbows, and the terminations of the pepper-and-salt trousers nearly reached his calf, that is to say nearly reached that portion of the leg where the calf begins to develop itself, when that respectable protuberance has any sensible existence. His face was pimply, as if to correspond with the ornaments on his jacket;

and his hair, somewhat towy in texture, was carefully parted in the centre.

He extended his mouth and his eyelids simultaneously as he noticed the reverend gentleman, whose summons he had so dilatorily obeyed. Presently the larger cavity puckered a little at the corner, the vacant gaze flashed with intelligence, and he broke out into an audible chuckle.

"Bless my heart, Dick, how you've grown since I saw you last!" exclaimed the Curate, in unfeigned astonishment.

"And no mistake!" replied the slender youth, with a very broad grin. "I think I grows all day long, and all night long too. And my appetite grows more nor anything. My clothes is too short for me; my bed's too short for me; and worse than all, my meals be too short for me. If master don't soon get me a new suit of livery, of double the size I had last year, I means to give warning. I feels so uncommon confined in this, I might just as well be in a prison."

"I dare say Mr. Crockett will do that. Is he in?"

"To be sure he is. Master's always in at

business hours. Please to go up to his room."

Mr. Fairholme ran up a broad staircase to the second-floor landing, preceded by the abbreviated jacket, and the dwarfed continuations. A door was opened, and his name having been announced, he entered a large room hung round with framed architectural designs in great variety, while models of buildings, in cork or *papiér-maché*, stood on different tables, cabinets, and presses.

Two articled clerks sat near the window at a table, on which were various mathematical instruments, fluid Indian ink, and camel's-hair pencils. They were drawing, and so absorbed with their work that they did not observe the entrance of the stranger. Much less than a minute before, however, they were tossing for six-dozen of oysters, and a quart of pale ale.

"Can I see Mr. Vitruvius Palladio Crockett?" inquired the Curate.

"I'll see, sir," replied the youngest of the two, jumping up with such alacrity that he dropped the florin with which he had been tossing, and it rolled to the other end of the

room, in spite of a quick dart made by the owner to check its progress. As he picked it up, a familiar chuckle made him turn sharp round, and he was aggravated by seeing the overgrown page in the half-open door grinning at him, as if perfectly aware of the amusement he had interrupted. The next moment the latter vanished, as the articled clerk, with his sense of dignity slightly disturbed, disappeared through another door.

"Clever design that!" observed the visitor, looking on the drawing-board of the other clerk.

"Yes, sir," replied that young gentleman, drawing one hand through his perfumed hair, as he supported the board with the other, gazing on the drawing with considerable satisfaction.

"But we are famous for clever designs, sir, especially in the Pointed English. There's a great demand for Gothic, and every muff fancies he can produce an elevation in that style with the corresponding specifications. But it requires an architect, sir, to design in the Pointed or Perpendicular English. We designed this church, sir, and I assure you it has been very much admired."

"We" adjusted his shirt-collar and his scarf, fastened with a fancy ring, and looked quite as consequential as if the pronoun was fairly applicable to *his* share in the transaction.

"My dear Mr. Fairholme," cried an elderly man, in a flowered dressing-gown, who came rapidly out of an inner room, with a pen in his hand, "I'm delighted to see you in town again."

This profession preceded a series of the kindest inquiries respecting his visitor's health, as well as that of his sister, and was followed by an equally anxious solicitude respecting anything and everything that could be thought to have the most remote connection with the welfare of either—all expressed in an eager, breathless manner.

The speaker was Mr. Vitruvius Palladio Crockett, F.S.A., an architect of considerable practice and moderate reputation, with whom the reader is not entirely unacquainted. He had been so long in the profession that he was, or ought to have been, fully qualified to build any structure, from a palace to a pie-shop. But his *specialité* was restoration. He had

restored venerable cathedrals and ancient manor houses—Anglo-Norman churches and Anglo-Saxon castles — Gothic, Tudor, and Anglo-Dutch mansions—in short, every kind of edifice of every possible character. Indeed, so universal was his genius in this line, that he had been equally successful with himself —for his fine flowing head of hair was a restoration, and so were his fine bright and regular set of teeth.

"I am writing a report," he added, in the same breathless haste, when he had done shaking his clerical friend by the hand, "for a committee of noblemen and gentlemen, to whom has been deputed the consideration of competitive designs for the new courts of justice; then I have got to meet the Vicar and Churchwardens respecting my plan for restoring the Church of St. Timothy-the-Less, in Barbican; afterwards I have to meet the contractors for my great work—the Station of the Grand Junction Terminus; besides, I promised the Dean and Chapter to give them my views respecting the best mode of preserving their venerable structure from absolute ruin; and then——"

"I'm afraid my visit is unseasonable, my dear sir."

"Not at all—not at all! Come in here! Could not have called at a better time. The designs and specifications you asked for are all ready."

The two friends proceeded into an inner room; and as the door closed, the articled clerks returned to the amusement that had been interrupted. This room was smaller than the other, and contained some of the artist's choicest designs. Rolls of drawing-paper were about the floor, as well as at the corners of the room; and piles of paper were on a cabinet. One side of the apartment contained a library, in which the majority of the books were large folios—evidently illustrative works. Several well-filled portfolios were on a stand on the opposite side.

"Now, my dear sir, you shall judge whether I have neglected your instructions."

He brought from a portfolio a set of drawings, from which he selected one, which he laid on the table with an air of triumph.

"This is the general elevation."

The Reverend Septimus Fairholme bent over it, and examined it carefully.

"Here is the church in the centre. Handsome structure, yet sufficiently simple; style, Decorated—with noble spire and picturesque porch. As a kind of right wing, here is the parsonage-house; style in harmony with the church. The other wing is formed by the schools—also Decorated, but less florid. The entire block is in one character, and will present a particularly picturesque aspect from every point of view.

"Here is a section of the church on a larger scale," (the architect brought forward another drawing,) "aisles, chancel, rood-loft, pulpit, windows—all in the best taste. There's a good deal of carving and ornamental work, gurgoyles, corbels, and the like, and the effect will be exceedingly rich.

"Here are plans of the Parsonage and Schools," he added, producing other drawings, which the Curate examined with equal care; indeed, all were evidently exceedingly interesting to him.

"The arrangements are the most convenient that could by any possibility be devised; to tell you no more than the truth, I think this the most perfect thing of the kind I ever

designed. I stake my professional reputation on its realizing your utmost anticipations. When completed, there won't be a clergyman in the Church of England who can boast of so complete a thing."

"It certainly does look very well on paper," observed the Curate, still examining the details attentively, "and there does not appear to have been anything omitted."

"I give you my word, my dear Fairholme," asserted the architect, with increased warmth, "if you had been the Archbishop of Canterbury I could not have exerted myself more to fulfil your instructions; indeed, I question whether I should have thought of taking so much trouble for his Grace as I have taken to please an old friend. I assure you that it has afforded me the warmest gratification. By the way, the patron of the living is very wealthy, is he not?"

"Yes; Mr. Drelincourt is a wealthy man. You had better forward the drawings to him, stating that I have approved of them; but you must accompany them with an estimate of the expenses, as he is a thorough man of business, and will not go in to anything till he knows what he has to pay."

"Of course, of course, my dear Fairholme, and very proper too. Everything shall be exactly as you wish. Allow me to express my sincere thanks for your thinking of me so kindly, and rest satisfied that I will do my utmost to prove that I have not been undeserving your recommendation."

"I was delighted to do a service to an old acquaintance," replied the Curate. "But," he added, with a more lively interest, "did you think of the idea I explained to you?"

"Did I think of it!" replied his friend, cheerfully, "I should think I did!" He produced another drawing,—"What do you say to that?"

The Curate of Middlecombe-Regis gazed with a peculiarly earnest scrutiny on an elevation of a structure apparently of a monastic character. It was not intended to be a very imposing building; indeed it was simple, but of a mediæval simplicity, and singularly quaint.

"Were I to try a hundred years I could not do anything of the kind better than that. Pugin could not have designed anything better. It is exactly the thing you want."

"And the expense?"

"Will be a *bagatelle.* It can be built very cheap. In fact, I shall do my part *con amore* —out of the respect I have for you, my dear Mr. Fairholme!"

The Curate thanked him warmly, but the architect seemed above such acknowledgments—he was enthusiastically disinterested.

They now chatted a little on old times and old acquaintances—the architect quite forgetful of the numerous demands he had upon his time. At last Mr. Fairholme took his leave, and passed into the ante-room a little before he was expected, for the architect's clerks were put into a tremendous flurry by his reappearance, to get possession of their drawing utensils, and look as if they were making a proper use of their time, which was, unfortunately for Mr. Vitruvius Palladio Crockett, with those young gentlemen, much more the exception than the rule.

"Dick!" said the reverend gentleman, as the page opened the door for him, "here's something for old acquaintance sake."

The boy received the half-crown with lively signs of satisfaction.

"But I hope when I call on your master again," he added, "you will have learnt to grow with moderation."

CHAPTER XXII.

MORNING CALLS.

LADY VALLANCE sat in a remarkably pleasant sitting-room in an hotel in Albemarle Street. She had been employed most part of the morning in writing letters, and evidences of her epistolary industry were visible on the smart table-cover. She was debating in her mind whether she should avail herself of the opportunity of posting these letters, to take a stroll through two or three of the fashionable thoroughfares in the neighbourhood, and amuse herself by looking at the innumerable objects of female interest she was sure to find displayed in the windows, when one of the waiters announced a visitor.

It was the Reverend Septimus Fairholme.

The Curate entered, looking more than usually excited. The lady could see, or fancied she could see, that he had come to some important determination; and she had no difficulty in guessing its import.

As he took a seat at her request, he thought that he had never seen her look so well, whether the result of the journey, or of a feeling that she had escaped from a position of painful embarrasment, or of a determination to return to her uncle in Italy, there could be no doubt that her complexion had a healthier tone, and her eyes a more sparkling lustre than they had previously possessed, and her clerical friend could not avoid gazing on her with feelings very like admiration.

Of this she was not unobservant, but she at once made up her mind to dispose of him and his admiration there and then. She was not without a certain feeling of regard for him; she appreciated his honourable qualities, and was ready to acknowledge her obligations for the important service he had rendered her; but situated as she was, she considered that she had no alternative but to get rid of

him, and this could best be done, she considered, by enlightening him as to her real position.

Mr. Fairholme commenced the conversation with courteous inquiries after her health, mingled with the proper amount of hopes that she had not been fatigued by her journey, and an average number of speculations about the weather. His companion was perfectly aware, from his reticent manner, that on none of these subjects had the worthy young clergyman sought the present interview; but she contented herself with giving courteous replies, and confining her portion of the conference to a few harmless topics that seemed sufficiently appropriate for the occasion.

"Miss Mauleverer," he at last exclaimed, as if with a desperate earnestness, "I have an idea."

"Have you, Mr. Fairholme?" she replied innocently, but with a slight dash of sarcasm.

"Yes, indeed I have. And I have entertained it ever since I first beheld you in the Grange pew at our parish church."

"Now it's coming," thought the young lady, and prepared herself for action.

"I shall never forget how you looked, Miss Mauleverer, when my gaze suddenly fell upon your face. I had not before had the most remote conception that there was such a face in that pew, or in the sacred edifice, or within the parochial bounds; and was taken very much by surprise."

"Were you, indeed?"

"I assure you I was. And yet the features seemed familiar to me. They reminded me of a face I had seen before, but for some time I could not remember where. At last it was suggested to me that it must have had its prototype in a certain ideal physiognomy to which I had often been attracted during my mediæval studies. I am very partial to early Christian art, Miss Mauleverer."

"Are you, Mr. Fairholme?"

"Yes, Miss Mauleverer, very partial—and there was one type of the female face, as delineated by artists of that time, who were usually priests, that was singularly angelic, saint, and martyr-like. It marvellously realized my ideas of the Virgin Mother in her terrible tribulation. That type of the female

face I recognized for the first time in the flesh, when I gazed down from the pulpit upon the stranger in the Grange pew."

"You surprise me, Mr. Fairholme!"

"You were then suffering under a great sorrow, and your personal appearance was altogether so deeply interesting that I do not wonder at the profound impression you produced upon me."

"How very singular!"

"My thoughts would flow into one channel, do all I could to restrain them to their course of duty, but whether in church or out of the church, whether away from you or in your presence, one idea was everlastingly present to me. It was an intention of giving you at as early an opportunity as possible, a prospect of relief to your sorrows and of consolation to your grief."

Lady Vallance did not utter any more common-place ejaculations. She felt that the crisis was approaching, and could not bring herself to do anything that looked like trifling with a man who seemed so thoroughly in earnest.

"Yes, Miss Mauleverer, I felt as a Gospel

verity, that I beheld for the first time a creature fashioned in the mould of the Christian heroine, who could afford me invaluable assistance in working out the ministry of human souls."

"No, no, Mr. Fairholme! You thought too highly of me!" she replied, with a choking sob.

"I had seen for a long time," added the zealous Curate, not noticing the interruption, "a crying want in the Reformed Church of England, and had desired to supply it, for it seemed daily becoming a more urgent necessity,—I allude to the want of a community of earnest-minded, God-fearing women, educated in the principles of the Anglican Church, who would devote their hearts, their lives, their souls, to the service of the sick, the poor, and the wretched."

Lady Vallance listened in profound silence.

"I thought that such thoroughly Christian women might easily be found, and organized into a properly-working sisterhood as soon as a qualified Lady-Superior could be met with. That honourable post, it was my conviction, no one could fill better than yourself."

"*Me!* Mr. Fairholme!" exclaimed the young lady, looking the intense astonishment she felt—indeed, she had never been so astonished in her life. The intimation she had received was so totally different to the declaration she had expected.

"That is my idea!" added the zealous Curate, with a look of mingled pride and enthusiasm. "I am in a position to add that I am in possession of funds for the erection of a suitable building that has been planned after the most approved monastic model. Moreover, I have procured a piece of land in my parish, where it is to be built. As Lady-Superior you will have the entire control of the Sisterhood, with ample funds for the performance of every good work, which truly good women can always so well perform. I really do not know any office for a lady in your peculiar position, Miss Mauleverer, which ought to be considered so enviable."

"You are labouring under a great mistake, my dear Mr. Fairholme, I assure you," she cried, evidently under strong emotion.

"You are not a Roman Catholic?" he asked, anxiously.

"No. I am of the same faith as my dear mother, who was a true and earnest Protestant of the Church of England."

"I thought that I had thoroughly satisfied myself on that point," he said, as the cloud on his brow cleared off as suddenly as it appeared. "Pardon me, then, if I add that I cannot see any obstacle to your accepting this honourable post, for which you seem so specially qualified."

"Believe me, you are altogether in error. I meant to have told you my sad history. I am not Miss Mauleverer—I have been married several months. I am Lady Vallance."

It was now the turn of her visitor to be intensely astonished, but his features expressed something beyond astonishment, they expressed dismay, perplexity, and vexation. His idea that had been so long and carefully elaborated, just when it seemed on the point of being successfully developed, was entirely overthrown. The zealous Curate looked the disappointment he felt.

Lady Vallance at once acquainted him with the more important particulars of her story, to which the estimable man presently listened

with an interest that made him partially forget his terrible failure. Then she told him her plans, and asked his advice. The consultation continued on the most confidential footing, till the reverend gentleman was not only made acquainted with the proceedings of his fair parishioner, but received numerous instructions for his guidance at Middlecombe-Regis, on his return.

They parted with mutual expressions of good-will. Indeed Lady Vallance had been deeply affected by her visitor's noble disinterestedness and earnestness of purpose, and Mr. Fairholme was, notwithstanding the overthrow of his favourite idea, very strongly impressed by the lady's narrative.

He took his way from the Hotel with mingled feelings of good and evil. He tried to reconcile himself to the idea that he had seen his interesting parishioner for the last time. It was the abrupt conclusion of a sacred romance that during its continuance had afforded him as much genuine pleasure as he had gained from all the illuminated MSS., and pre-Raphaelite pictures that had come under his observation. It was a pity

that it should so have ended. In a monastic habit, that beautiful face and graceful figure would have looked as nearly angelic as it would be possible for frail mortality to be.

The Reverend Septimus Fairholme sighed. It was not easy to reconcile himself to such a disappointment.

He presently turned his thoughts to more cheerful subjects, and got consolation out of the gratifying prospect which the munificence of Mr. Drelincourt had afforded him. The dilapidated parish church was to be rebuilt after the best model the Curate could procure, at the sole expense of the proprietor of the Hall, moreover with a convenient parsonage, and commodious schools. The designs had been entrusted to his old friend, and had been submitted to and approved by his patron, from whom he had that morning received a letter authorizing him to give the necessary orders for the commencement of the work. This would necessitate his early return to Middlecombe-Regis.

But he could not make up his mind to leave town without calling upon a lady to whose influence he owed the living. So as it

was a convenient hour for waiting on her, he made direct for the West-end Square in which the family mansion was situated.

After ringing the visitor's bell at what the auctioneers would designate "a first-class town residence," with an imposing portico newly painted, he was ushered by the porter into a square hall, furnished with a porter's chair, and an umbrella-stand. It was covered with bright oil-cloth, and possessed an unusually substantial mat by the street entrance.

Mr. Fairholme was left in this chamber, whilst his card was taken in by the porter. He was attracted by two large paintings hung on each side the wall, in very handsome frames. The one was a mountainous landscape bearing the inscription

"THE MARQUIS MOUNT-TREVOR ASCENDING MONT BLANC."

It was intended to be a sublime representation of the monarch of mountains, painted if not with great breadth, unquestionably with great height, for glacier mounted above glacier, and peak above peak, till the summit seemed to be in the picture frame.

Mr. Fairholme looked about for the Marquis, and like many other persons who knew him better, had some difficulty in making him out. At last he discovered a strange figure, in a green hat, emerging from what was intended to represent a *crevasse*, several other figures, with ropes and poles, apparently guides, helping him in what was evidently a painful progress.

The reverend gentleman supposed the figure in the green hat to be the Marquis, simply because there was no other figure on the mountain it was possible for him to accept as an English nobleman; but it would not have been impossible for him to have satisfied himself that it was a frog in a green hat, of an ambitious turn of mind.

Having sufficiently admired the sky, the snow, the ice, and, more than all, the most noble the excelsior of the scene, Mr. Fairholme turned his attention to the other picture, which was labelled—

"THE MARQUIS MOUNT-TREVOR ASCENDING MONTE ROSA."

This was quite as sublime a display of glacier upon glacier and peak upon peak—the clouds

enveloping the higher elevations of the canvas, and the summit being lost in the moulding. After a careful scrutiny, the hero of the adventure could be made out, perched on a very high rock, surrounded by other figures, unquestionably of subordinate interest. He might easily have been mistaken for an eagle moulting, only that eagles do not wear green hats generally, and the figure that was doing duty for the Marquis Mount-Trevor was absolutely waving one round his head. It certainly was a sublime landscape, and an uncommonly sublime Marquis.

"My lady will receive you in the boudoir, Sir. Please to walk this way."

Mr. Fairholme, hat in hand, followed the admirably got-up groom of the chambers through crimson folding-doors into another hall, where there was a display of sculpture and exotics, then up a magnificent staircase covered with a magnificent carpet, the walls painted with a scene from "Olympus," that was much more gorgeous than decorous—through a superb suite of drawing-rooms, containing objects of art and *virtú* sufficient to supply half the trading virtuosos in London,

till that model domestic opened a gold-and-satin-wood door with an ivory handle, and announcing his name, ushered him into the prettiest chamber in May-Fair.

I shall not attempt to describe the upholstery-work; it was all from Paris, and, of course in taste singularly *recherché*. Nor can I stop to note the contents of the china-closets and cabinets, as seen through their plate-glass doors; nor give the most remote idea of the numberless articles of *bijouterie* that were crammed into every available space.

The fact is, that the attention of the visitor was absorbed by the pictures that, in an unbroken series, went round the room, making, however, their most attractive display over the fireplace. They were reduced copies of the finest pictures in the Vatican, exquisitely done for the Marchioness as a present from her amiable friend, as her ladyship designated him, the reigning Pontiff.

It is impossible to do justice to the effect produced on the mind of the Curate by these masterpieces of Raphael, Guilio Romano, Michael Angelo, Guido, and Carlo Dolce and a score of other illustrious painters,

faithfully rendered as they had been by the best modern artists at Rome. Mr. Fairholme was so absorbed by this gratification of his æsthetic tastes, that he quite overlooked the occupant of the room—though she was not one in personal appearance or in social position likely to be passed unnoticed.

She sat in a delicate morning robe, in a *fauteuil* of satin, embroidered with gold, with a book in her hand; but she was not reading. Her noble head rested upon a beautifully-shaped hand—the ivory arm well displayed on the support of the chair, and the pure Grecian outline of the face was turned towards her visitor, with the slightest possible smile of satisfaction as she observed his preoccupation.

"You are fond of pictures, Mr. Fairholme," said a soft, mellow voice.

Nothing could have been more pleasant than the sound; yet it seemed to startle the young clergyman exceedingly.

"Pardon my apparent rudeness, Lady Mount-Trevor," he exclaimed, advancing reverentially. "I really lost myself while gazing on these charming examples of art."

The Marchioness held out her hand, and then motioned him to a seat near her.

"I really am glad to see you in London," she said. "The fact is, we are only in town for two or three days, and shall return to Mount-Trevor Court, where, of course, I shall see you, for we think of staying there at least a month longer before we go abroad again. But I particularly wish to know what you think of your parish and the people in it."

The slightest intimation of a wish from the Marchioness Mount-Trevor was a command to her clerical *protégé*, and the Reverend Septimus Fairholme, without seeking for motives, entered at once into the state of Middlecombe-Regis, social and spiritual.

This did not appear to be the information the Marchioness wanted, for she listened without manifesting the slightest interest.

The Curate then launched into the all-important subject of the rebuilding of the church, and the proposed erection of a new parsonage and school-house. His enthusiasm met with no response. The tranquil beauty of the face before him remained unaffected by a particle of human sympathy.

"Is not Mr. Drelincourt, I think they call him," inquired her ladyship, suddenly, "said to be very wealthy?"

Mr. Fairholme testified to the general opinion of that gentleman's large fortune.

"Has he any children?"

The Curate mentioned the heiress, and dwelt warmly on her amiability and her accomplishments.

"You have met my second son at their house, I suppose?" was the next inquiry, but uttered in the cold tone of the others, as though the speaker thought no more of Lord Lionel visiting there than of his visiting the dilapidated parish church.

Mr. Fairholme could safely say that he had frequently met his lordship there,—in fact, he could not have remembered an instance of Lord Lionel being absent when he visited the Hall.

"Do you think Mr. Drelincourt a vulgar man?" was asked, very slowly and distinctly.

"Not at all, Lady Mount-Trevor. He has not the slightest pretensions to be a fashionable man. All he aspires to is to be a country gentleman; and, though there may be a little

eccentricity in the assumption, country gentlemen are to be met every day whose manners are much less agreeable."

"He has been in trade, hasn't he, Mr. Fairholme?"

"Mr. Drelincourt was at the head of a large mercantile firm,—partly merchants, partly brokers, but has retired from the business several years, after having realized a very large fortune."

"Then his appearance, his manners, are not those of a vulgar man?"

"I never observed any approach to vulgarity in either."

"And his daughter might pass for a young lady?"

"Unquestionably. Her education has evidently been very carefully attended to, and she is particularly prepossessing and lady-like."

"It is just possible, Mr. Fairholme, that I may present Miss Drelincourt at an early Drawing Room, next season," observed the Marchioness. It was not, however, with any such idea that she had desired to have a private communication with the Curate of Middlecombe-Regis.

While this conversation was proceeding in the *boudoir*, two gentlemen were in a handsomely-furnished room on the ground floor. One, a young man of about five-and-twenty, was lying at full length on the sofa, in morning costume, reading a novel. The other, his senior by at least a score of years, was in a dressing-gown sitting before a table, poring over a map. They were the Marquis Mount-Trevor and his eldest son Viscount Cassington.

"Is that reverend choker gone yet?" said the Viscount, after perpetrating a yawn. "I wonder how many varieties of that animal mamma patronizes? There's the Roman Catholic, that fellow with the delicate features, the women seem so mad about in Chelsea; then there's the Anglican, the women are so frantic after in Belgravia; then there's the Presbyterian, who holds out to no end of enthusiastic crinolines somewhere in the city; then there's the Baptist, with his big tabernacle over the water—to say nothing of some half-a-dozen fashionable chokers, high church and low, broad and narrow, who display their

eloquence and their white hands in the pulpits of May Fair, St. George's, Hanover Square, Brompton, Kensington, and other well-paying districts, where serious young ladies are as plentiful as butterflies in summer, and serious old ladies as abundant as mice in a barn."

His elder companion did not reply, though it was evident that he heard what was said. He merely raised his head from the map and made a grimace. The Marquis never committed himself by the expression of an opinion adverse to any predilection of his lady. He knew his duty better; but he had a diplomatic way of letting it be known that he felt a distaste for it sometimes.

"I should uncommonly like to put them to some use," added the hopeful heir of the house of Mount-Trevor, stretching his arms and yawning again.

The pleasant well-whiskered face of the Marquis glowed with a sudden sense of the facetious, though he pretended to be engaged with his map of the Alps.

"Couldn't you get 'em to run a race at Hackney Wick, or at Kennington Oval, or at

some other place patronized by the readers of *Bell's Life?*"

"Perhaps you'll suggest the idea to them, confidentially?" said the hopeful father, with a malicious twinkle in his eyes.

"No, thank you," was the reply. "But I'll tell you what I'll do; I'll back the tabernacle-man against the field, if you'll start 'em. That's fair, isn't it?"

"Uncommon, Cass," exclaimed the Marquis, with a chuckle. "But you see, my dear boy, I'm not acquainted with their pedestrian powers."

"Oh! if they can only use their legs half as nimbly as they do their tongues, they must be all Deerfoots."

"I shouldn't wonder. But in the first place I think the favourite would be sure to get scratched——"

"Not by the women, I'll lay a hundred!"

Both laughed heartily.

"Then it's certain to be a cross, or a dead-heat, or a wrangle. I never knew a parson acknowledge himself beaten in argument, and as soon as such fellows come to a controversy they come to a quarrel. Look at the

'Essays and Reviews' and their attackers! Look at the Bishop of Natal and his opponents!"

"I'm afraid there'll be no race," said Lord Cassington.

"Not unless your mamma patronized it," observed Lord Mount-Trevor.

The Marquis was partial to looking at things from a facetious point of view, and this last suggestion was evidently a happy instance of his talent in that line, for it seemed to be highly appreciated.

"By the way, have you seen the new governess?" inquired the young man, listlessly.

"No, I haven't yet enjoyed that supreme felicity. What is she like?"

"Augusta gave me a stunning description of her. I have seen her since, and I assure you the description scarcely does her justice."

"My dear boy, I think—pardon me, you are doing your sister no good."

"What's up?"

"I'am afraid that under your auspices, the child is contracting tastes that are not at all appropriate to her rank or to her sex."

"O, there's no harm in anything she does."

"I beg your pardon. Some respect for propriety must be cultivated you know, and if what your aunt tells me is true, it is high time that she had a more prudent instructor than her elder brother."

"What in the world have I done?"

"Your aunt says that she found your sister with a pair of boxing-gloves on, squaring up to her toilet glass."

"You don't say so!"

"Yes; and the horrified lady assured me that her niece complained bitterly of the interruption, as she was just about putting in a floorer."

"Goodness gracious!"

The young hopeful laughed, and the old hopeful with difficulty maintained his gravity.

"I really don't see any advantage in a young lady breaking her looking-glass, particularly when, as in this instance, she happens to be very pretty."

"O! it must be prevented, of course. The dear little creature took the gloves out of my room. I'll tell Jarvis to lock them up."

"Ah do; and tell him to lock up your cigar-boxes, for your aunt said that she experienced a strong smell of tobacco in your sister's dressing-room."

"She once attempted a cigarette, but I thought she didn't like it."

"It's not the proper thing at all, Cass. Besides, it may make her ill. She complained of head-ache, you know, yesterday."

"So she did. I'll take care for the future. I should never forgive myself if the dear child got into any scrape through my carelessness. But she really is such a clever, lively, original, amusing, good-natured, happy creature, that I never could deny her anything, and have always been delighted to see her pleased."

"You've been very fond of her, I know, and she's as fond of you, I've no doubt. But you must really consider, Cass, that a little refinement is essential to a young lady."

"Exactly."

The dialogue had come to a conclusion. The Marquis had become as serious as he could be. It was evident that he could not regard his daughter's unfeminine eccentricities

from a facetious point of view. The Viscount seemed impressed with the necessity of a little caution, in his share of the education of his little pleasant playfellow; but the impression was not likely to be durable.

At this moment a footman entered.

"If you please, my lord," the man said, addressing the master of the house, "her ladyship wishes to know if your lordship is going to ride this morning?"

"Tell your lady I will dress immediately—and send Rogers to my room."

"Yes, my lord." The man disappeared.

"I shall go to the club," said Lord Cassington, rising from the sofa.

"Suppose you call on Lady Palmerston," suggested Lord Mount-Trevor, "saying we are going to leave town again directly, and try if you can make out whether there is likely to be an opening for you anywhere."

"A good idea!"

The hopeful father and the hopeful son parted. The former to ride in the Park with the Marchioness, the latter improperly to make a long call in a bye-street in Belgravia.

CHAPTER XXIII.

AFTER-DINNER ELOQUENCE.

A WEEK later, there was a grand dinner party at Mount-Trevor Court. All the county magnates had been invited, and a very long table that went nearly the length of the noble dining-room was barely sufficient for their accommodation. But the dinner was got up in the best style, a French cook of eminence having been brought from London to superintend the *cuisine*, and at least half-a-dozen additional footmen engaged to wait upon the guests.

The Marquis of Mount-Trevor prided himself on his popularity. His eldest son being one of the liberal members for the county, he

did not know how he could avoid avowing liberal principles. Not that this is an invariable family rule. We have known the opposite course adopted in more than one instance. But the present generation of the Mount-Trevor race, chose to keep in a groove, that allowed them to proceed easily rather than expeditiously.

The patrician Paterfamilias appeared to be aware that he had no administrative capacity, and did not strain after official dignity, as many of his ancestors had done, and many of his contemporaries were still doing. It is true, that it might be said his lordship had once accepted office, but it was only that of "Gold Stick," a position that did not exercise any material influence upon his faculties, and this he had resigned some years before our story commenced.

Since the Marquis had abandoned the life of a courtier he had amused himself with foreign travel. He had visited almost all the Continental states described by Murray's hand-books, some a good many times, as he rarely spent more than two or three months in England. But in the last year or two he

had taken to mountain climbing, and though it was considerably more laborious at his time of life than political climbing, he had embraced it with characteristic Mount-Trevor ardour. He suddenly became aware that rank has its duties as well as its gratifications. His eldest son had a a career before him, and the Prime Minister was disposed to give him a chance, whenever there should be an opening at the Board of Admiralty, or any other minor office should be at his disposal.

Unfortunately, Viscount Cassington was not a bit more ambitious than his father. He kept a couple of race-horses and paid more attention to their performances than he did to the friendly statesman. He had other claims upon his purse and his time which equally interfered with his parliamentary vocation. In short, his lordship was a good-natured, indolent, pleasure-loving young man, with as little harm in him as had ever been in any of the Mount-Trevors, and, as far as could be judged by his college and parliamentary career, with as little good.

The Marquis invited his son's most influential constituents in expectation that the

Viscount would exert himself in assisting him to do them honour. There was Sir Pouncefort Pouncefort, of "the Chase," a venerable purple-visaged baronet, who had contested the county nearly half a century ago, and having spent a moiety of his fortune in obtaining the honour he coveted, had the satisfaction of being unseated by a committee, after an M.P. reign of six weeks. His expensive experience in parliamentary matters had subsequently been at the disposal of any candidate opposed to the party who unseated him.

Then there was the Honourable Major-General Toplofty, C.B., of "the Grove," who lived on his half-pay, his Indian pension and his savings during his military service; and contrived to live very well. Having passed an active life, the General could not now permit his energies to go to sleep, and he contrived to have something to do with everything that was going on around him, whether it happened to be the establishment of an hospital or a race-course, the building of a church, or the prosecution of a poacher. His embrowned complexion, fiery black eyes, close cut head of hair, and white moustache, were

sure to be recognized in every committee of county notables that were called together, whether to elect a workhouse chaplain, open a new road, organize a volunteer force, or secure a subscription pack of hounds.

Next to him in importance was Admiral Lord Bluffington, a little stout man, with a fiery red face and weak ferret eyes, protected by a green silk shade. An empty sleeve appeared to show how his professional honours had been won, and the evidence was not deceptive; for, when a midshipman, and in the act of boarding an enemy's ship, he had been cut down by a powerful Frenchman, who did not disdain a small foe. The enemy's ship was taken after a fierce resistance, and young Bluffington, though he lost his arm, had so well recommended himself to the notice of the Admiralty that they never afterwards lost sight of him.

With him had come the Bishop of the diocese—his first appearance there. A singularly mild and harmless ecclesiastic, who had once published a book on Hebrew points, and had married the daughter of an Earl; but whether Dr. Crumpe owed his bishopric to

his book or to his wife, nobody could decide. Public opinion, however, was more in favour of the latter, because everyone had seen the Bishop's wife, and no one had seen the Bishop's book; the reason for this however being, that Lady Dorothea Scrymgeour was everywhere, and the volume on Hebrew points, nowhere—at least nowhere where the county could take cognizance of it.

It is unnecessary to catalogue all these provincial celebrities—some we may introduce to the reader more formally presently; let it suffice for the present to say, that the table of the Marquis was honoured by the presence of every individual of note living within twenty miles, including an eminent German palæontologist and geologist who was assisting in scientific survey of the district, Dr. Grauwacke, and a pre-Raphaelite, Mr. Tintoretto Jones, who had come to Mount-Trevor Court to paint the portrait of the Marchioness.

Occupying the post of honour at the right hand of his noble host, sat Mr. Drelincourt, looking exceedingly respectable, if not aristocratic, in a fashionable dress-suit. Whether it was the fault of his artistically

tied cravat or of his somewhat tight-fitting vest, he felt a trifle too stiff. In the early part of the dinner, finding himself for the first time surrounded by great people, he was not quite at his ease, but the polite attentions of the Marquis, and the absence of anything like offensive curiosity in his distinguished guests, gradually reassured him.

By the time the fish had been removed, he had regained his usual confidence. He felt that it was incumbent on him to be social, and after a glance at the meek old gentleman next him, who seemed to enjoy his hock in a particularly sociable way, the retired merchant thought he might attempt a little conversation.

"Not much stirring in the papers, I think," he observed, seeing the meek old gentleman looking blandly towards him.

"I never read newspapers," was the mild response.

"Well, for my part, I couldn't get on at all without the *Times*. It's meat and drink to me, especially when there's anything more than usually interesting going on. Now, there was that row about Bishop Colenso——"

"My dear Mr. Drelincourt," here interposed the Marquis who had overheard his friend's observation, "permit me the honour of introducing you to my venerable friend and diocesan the Right Reverend Dr. Crumpe."

The Bishop, whose mild face had suddenly assumed an air of painful gravity, directly the name of his brother ecclesiastic met his ear, now smiled amiably and bowed courteously, as the retired merchant made a reverential inclination of his head.

"My dear fellow!" whispered Lord Mount-Trevor. "For Heaven's sake don't speak of the Colenso scandal to Bishop Crumpe. He'll go into a fit!"

Mr. Drelincourt felt a good deal shocked at the impropriety of which he had been guilty, for as one of the landed gentry, he knew that it was of the first importance that he should endeavour to be on good terms with his bishop. "Church and State" had always been the shibboleth of the model country gentleman, at least from the time of Sir Roger of historic memory. So he waited his opportunity, and when that

estimable ecclesiastic had finished his venison, to which the right reverend gentleman had so energetically devoted himself that his neighbour could not venture to disturb him, and had again turned his placid countenance towards him, as if to invite to sociality, he made another attempt.

"Pray can you tell me, my Lord," he inquired, "who is that stiff old lady in black satin and bugles, about the middle of the table opposite, who is looking this way with an uncommon sharp aspect?"

The good Bishop kindly, almost benevolently, turned his episcopal glance in the direction indicated by his neighbour.

"I hope she isn't watching me," added the Squire, "but she has fixed her uncommonly penetrating gaze in this direction, ever since I took my seat."

No sooner did Dr. Crumpe recognize the countenance he had been invited to observe, than the expression of his own, perceptibly changed. The kindness vanished, the benevolence suffered a sudden eclipse. He looked as much frightened as annoyed.

"That lady, sir, is—" he said in a hushed tone, "that lady, sir, is Lady Dorothea Scrymgeour," and he added more solemnly, "that lady, sir, is—my wife!"

"My dear Drelincourt," again interposed the attentive host, "you must try and recommend yourself to the Bishop's amiable lady. You and her ladyship would get on famously together, I have no doubt. Lady Dorothea has such enlightened views about the moral education of the poor, and may be of the greatest service to you in developing your large-hearted intentions in the same direction."

The Marquis knew nothing of his guest's charitable intentions; he only knew that it was imperative on him to say something to prevent the Bishop taking offence at his guest's awkward question.

"Lady Dorothea is quite the good Samaritan of the county," continued Lord Mount-Trevor; "and if she had the inestimable advantage of your princely fortune, my dear Drelincourt, her ladyship would never cease her good works till she had rebuilt half the parish churches in a circuit of fifty miles. We

should never be able to get on without Lady Dorothea; should we, Bishop?"

The prelate smiled with a tender humility, and gave a rapid but gracious scrutiny of the princely fortune, the inestimable advantage of which his wife might possibly secure.

"Yes, my Lord," he replied, "Lady Dorothea Scrymgeour is exceedingly active in her benevolence. If Mr. Drelincourt is about to put forward any plan for extending the charities of the Church, he cannot do better than consult her ladyship."

"Be civil to her, by all means," whispered the Marquis, while the Bishop's attention was taken up by the Admiral who sat on his other side. "You won't be able to get on at all without her; but let me warn you beforehand, as a friend, that her ladyship is the greatest nuisance in this part of the United Kingdom."

"Bless my heart!" thought the somewhat embarrassed country gentleman, "what very strange people are to be found in good society. But I hope Henrietta is getting on with them better than I do."

He glanced towards the other end of the

table where his daughter sat near the Marchioness, and if he might judge from the smile on her fresh charming face, as she listened to something the young Viscount at her side was saying to her with exceeding animation, she must be getting on remarkably well.

"Oh!" he continued, musingly, "if she had captivated the heir, instead of the second son, what an immense advantage that would have been. In time she must have been a Marchioness! Well, well,—I have reason to be satisfied with things as they are. Lord Lionel is a noble young fellow, and in all probability will make a position for himself, almost as high as that his brother will obtain by the accident of birth."

During the remainder of the dinner, Mr. Drelincourt had no reason to complain of the inattention of his right-reverend neighbour, for at every short interval of cessation for his knife and fork, that most orthodox prelate favoured him with many private and confidential opinions on education, on church government, on scientific infidelity, and—much more than all—on Lady Dorothea Scrymgeour, who was evidently the alpha and omega of the Bishop's knowledge.

Mr. Drelincourt could see the sharp visage of that lady as faithful to one direction as a vane to a continuous north-easter; but he now felt satisfied that he was not the object of her watchful care, and gave himself no more concern about her.

The attentive host had no further occasion to interpose to prevent his guest committing himself by some unpardonable *gaucherie*, and contented himself with a few well-meant attempts to draw him out for the favourable consideration of the county magnates at that end of the table, every now and then dropping a friendly hint into his ear for his special guidance.

With the exception of a few trifling errors, the new *bourgeoise gentilhomme* conducted himself very well. He mistook the German geologist for an ambassador, and the fashionable pre-Raphaelite for an eminent statesman, but any one might have done the same. Dr. Grauwacke's blue spectacles and high forehead were highly suggestive of diplomacy; and Mr. Tintoretto Jones wore his hair long and his nose short, and tried to talk like a Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Nothing was so easy as to fall into such mistakes; and when the ladies had retired, the Marquis thanked his stars that his office of bear-leader, as he considered it, had not been so ridiculous as he had anticipated that it would prove. He saw his accomplished heir bow out the last of his fair guests with a considerable feeling of relief, and hoped that with a little vigilance and tact, he might be able to get through the rest of the sitting with at least equal success.

"Now, my Lord," said Sir Pouncefort Pouncefort, as he drew his chair nearer to his host, "I hope that your lordship will permit me the privilege of a very old acquaintance—I think I may say the very oldest acquaintance in the room—to a—to a—to ask your lordship's opinion as to the state of the a—as to the state of the ministry."

"Hear! hear!" cried the Honourable Major-General Toplofty.

"Hear! hear!" echoed Admiral Lord Bluffington.

There was a general move of chairs towards the head of the table, and an air of interest and excitement in every face. Even Dr.

Grauwacke looked through his coloured spectacles as if certain of hearing some important revelations respecting that, to him, immensely interesting subject, the Schleswig-Holstein question; while Mr. Tintoretto Jones stroked his Vandyke beard affectionately, as if he felt sure that the opportunity was before him that he had so often longed for, of explaining his exalted views on high art, and—of abusing the Royal Academy right and left. The Bishop, too, was sensible of a flutter of excitement. His wife was the sister of a Lord Chancellor, and should he return to the woolsack, further preferment was not at all unlikely.

"My dear Sir Pouncefort," cried the Marquis, putting on an equivocal expression of face, "I must express my surprise that such an experienced politician, and one who so thoroughly knows the state of parties, should fall into the error that a private individual like myself should have anything to do with Cabinet secrets."

"Oh! of course not, my Lord," replied the venerable Baronet, looking very knowing, first at his host, and then at some of the company

"Of course not," echoed the Honourable Major-General Toplofty, also looking very knowing.

"Of course not," repeated Lord Bluffington, cocking his ferrety eyes in a peculiar way, which elicited a laugh from that end of the table.

"Those newspaper fellows do make such strange mistakes," added Sir Pouncefort, looking still more significantly.

"Oh! they're not to be depended upon, at all," said the Major-General, with something like a wink at the Admiral.

"Not in the least, by George," cried the latter emphatically, with something very like a wink at the Major-General.

"My dear fellow, what is it you mean?" inquired Lord Mount-Trevor, trying to appear innocent and unconscious. "Pass the wine, Jones."

"Why you see, my Lord," replied the Baronet, with an air of mystery, "We quiet country gentlemen are not, I am aware, expected to know much; but this we *do* know——"

He paused and looked more mysteriously.

The Bishop was hanging upon his words as if he anticipated they would announce his translation to the primacy. Dr. Grauwacke was as intently gazing at his face through his coloured spectacles as if it belonged to a newly-discovered specimen of man, coeval with the Flint-implement period; and Mr. Tintoretto Jones held his snub nose up in the air, as he watched the same indicator, as though he saw the hateful letters R.A. in every wrinkle.

"This we *do* know, my Lord," added the venerable Baronet. "A greater proof of confidence can scarcely be given by a Prime Minister than accepting an invitation to dine with a nobleman so intimately connected with the Court, as the person your Lordship modestly designates a private individual."

"That's it, Sir Pouncefort," cried the Honourable Major Toplofty.

"There's no denying *that*," exclaimed the Admiral, with a like tone of mingled confidence and exultation.

The Bishop threw himself back in his chair, and a shade of disappointment passed over his mild physiognomy. The man of

science and the man of art, however, did not change their attitudes of absorbed attention, only they turned their gaze in the direction of the Marquis.

Lord Mount-Trevor laughed good-humouredly. As I have already intimated, he was rather partial to looking at serious things from a facetious point of view.

"I must say, my dear Sir Pouncefort," he commenced, "that you are as right this time, as it is well known in the county, you are always."

"Hear! hear!" cried the Admiral and the Major-General simultaneously, as their old friend bowed his reverend head in acknowledgment of the compliment.

"Lord Palmerston did honour me so far, as to accept my invitation to dinner."

The county magnates exchanged looks pregnant with political meaning. The Bishop again bent forward.

"We were at school together, and have always remained on the most friendly terms."

The county magnates again exchanged looks of intense intelligence. The German palæontologist felt assured that he was about to

hear the details of a conference that must have a mighty influence on the Schleswig-Holstein question. The fashionable artist felt as equally assured that the Premier had accepted his old friend's invitation with no other object than to settle the hash of that miserable oligarchy in Trafalgar Square. The Bishop wanted assurance, but he listened.

"Lord Palmerston came, and much as I have seen of my old schoolfellow's extraordinary social powers, I never knew him to be so entertaining. I did not ask any one to meet my old friend."

Once more the county magnates telegraphed to each other their simultaneous impressions—they regarding the last sentence as a very suggestive admission.

"The reason of his lordship having been so delightful a companion is easy of explanation—I did not suffer a word about politics to be uttered, from his sitting down to his rising to depart."

For a moment the county magnates looked blank, and the same change seemed to be reflected upon the features of Dr. Grauwacke

and Mr. Tintoretto Jones. Dr. Crumpe again fell back in his chair.

"Oh! very good, my Lord, very good!" at last cried the venerable Baronet, as if perfectly satisfied, though he did not choose to take quite the ordinary interpretation of his host's words.

"Capital! capital!" shouted the Honourable Major-General.

"Of course! of course!" and Admiral Bluffington laid his fat finger beside his fat nose, with nautical humour irresistibly comic. Everybody laughed. The Bishop helped himself to claret.

"My dear Drelincourt," whispered the Marquis to his next neighbour, who had been an amused spectator of the little scene, "can't you say something, *apropos* to anything or everything, just to put a stop to these fellows boring me in this ridiculous way?"

At any other time Lord Mount-Trevor would have thought it his duty to repress any desire his new friend might have displayed to make a speech at his table, but he really so very much wanted to be relieved from the observations of his provincial allies, that he gladly seized upon the first idea that presented itself for diverting their attention.

Mr. Drelincourt rose at the friendly suggestion, though very far from knowing what was expected from him. But if there was one thing that he could really do well, it was a speech. In the course of his honourable commercial career he had filled more than one civic post in the large and busy city in which his extensive business had been conducted, and he had acquired a good deal of experience in oratory, public and private. As he confined himself to subjects on which he was well informed, he had been a popular speaker with his fellow-citizens. But he did not feel quite so much at home amongst these county magnates, who gazed at him when he stood up with undisguised wonder.

His eye fell upon Lord Cassington, who with his brother Lord Clarence and two or three other young men of family were at the other end of the table, making bets on a steeple-chase that was to come off in the neighbourhood the following week.

He took his cue at once. He was well aware that his noble friend had called upon him to speak only that he might escape being further bated by his inquisitive guests, and

therefore all that was necessary for him to say must have one clear object, to lead their thoughts into a totally different channel. He therefore began an address of the most approved post-prandiary pattern, that seemed at once to draw upon him the attention of all the company.

"I hope the poor fellow won't make a very desperate fool of himself," was the charitable prayer of his host—to himself of course. The county magnates appeared to be taken by surprise; but having heard certain reports respecting the stranger, and observing Lord Mount-Trevor looking at them in a singularly pleasant manner, they anticipated some amusement.

Dr. Grauwacke had contrived to learn that the new speaker was a great capitalist, and naturally set him down in his own mind as the great Rothschild, and as naturally concluded that he was going to propose an arrangement about the precious duchies, in the shape of indemnity. Mr. Tintoretto Jones had heard that he was a liberal patron of art, and his conclusions were still more naturally of the Tony Lumpkin type—of that

concatenation accordingly which most harmonized with his hatred of a certain brutalizing institution that hung his pictures shamefully, and refrained from electing him an associate.

The Bishop was mildly curious to know what his new acquaintance was going to say, and leant forward; and the betting men, at the other end of the table, closed their transactions, and winking at each other, listened in the expectation of being amused at the expense of the orator.

He could not complain of having an inattentive audience. If they were attentive at the commencement of his speech, they were still more so as it proceeded. It soon became evident to Lord Mount-Trevor that his guest whom he had been striving so hard to keep out of scrapes, had not now the slightest intention of making a fool of himself. Presently the Marquis was surprised, the county magnates were surprised, the prelate was surprised, the young men at the further end of the table were very much surprised, even the representatives of art and science were affected much in the same manner, though their sur-

prise was of a more equivocal character than that of the rest of the company.

The opportunity for the display of oratory was limited to the brief interval permitted to an after-dinner speech, and the speaker's intention did not go beyond proposing the health of the heir of the house, but he contrived by an equal display of good taste and good feeling to recommend himself to his anditory quite as much as his subject.

The entire assembly became animated and pleased; encouraging exclamations and cordial cheers followed the well-turned periods, and every one appeared inclined to endorse the sentiments of "the new man," almost before they found utterance. The face of the Marquis began to express a sense of gratified astonishment; the Viscount, impressed with the idea that the speech had been suggested by his father, tried to look modest and filial,—though it is not at all improbable that he regarded the whole affair as a confounded bore. The county magnates evidently considered it their duty to take up the thing *con amore*, and the Bishop, of course, went with the county magnates. The eminent

geologist looked a little puzzled; he was vainly trying to discover the relation the speech to which he was listening, bore to the one great political subject uppermost in his thoughts. The fashionable pre-Raphaelite appeared a trifle dissatisfied. The orator had said nothing about high art, and had not once attempted to abuse the Royal Academy.

The young men at the other end of the table were in raptures, and their encouragement of the speaker was as hearty as it was genuine. From time to time in an under tone they added a sort of running commentary, which very much tried the gravity of the subject of the speech, who continued to study the pattern of his dessert plate with increased assiduity.

When the orator sat down, he was altogether a different person to the individual he had been when he stood up. Not only was his oration followed by the usual cheerful jingling, chattering, cheering demonstrations that reward successful after-dinner oratory, —he was regarded as the personal friend of every one in the room.

Lord Cassington rose, amid all sorts of

encouragement from his associates, and having wiped his moustache with his napkin with peculiar deliberation, proceeded to return thanks for the honour that had been conferred upon him.

He had often gone through the same operation; how often, it could not have been easy for his lordship to say, for the estimate must have included innumerable symposia in his own rooms when professedly a student at Oxford, innumerable jollifications in everybody else's rooms in the University and everywhere else; hunting dinners, racing dinners, and sporting dinners in almost every part of the kingdom—white-bait refections at Blackwall, parliamentary spreads at the London taverns, and *recherché* banquets in much more pleasant company, at the "Star and Garter," Richmond, the Crystal Palace, Sydenham, and at the equally familiar Cremorne Hotel.

But with all his post-prandiary experience, the young Viscount did not seem to be quite master of the situation. Whether taken by surprise, or affected by the well-expressed compliments he had just heard, it is certain that he felt quite as much embarrassed as

when he undertook the duty in an early stage of his parliamentary career, of seconding the address, and found it not so easy as he had anticipated.

However, after indulging a little perhaps at random, in the customary common-places, he continued to express a few sentences much more to the purpose and sat down with as lively manifestations of applause, as ever rewarded Gladstone's most elaborate discourse.

The Marquis immediately stood on his legs, his usual facetious affability of manner tempered with an air of sincerity and earnestness that suggested to all who knew him, that he was about to say something of serious importance. Immediately there was a profound silence, and an appearance of intense attention that extended even to the other end of the table. Yet their host rose only to propose the health of his esteemed friend and neighbour Mr. Drelincourt, who had just laid him under a personal obligation in a manner not less gratifying to himself than he was sure it had been to all his friends.

This allusion elicited such emphatic ap-

plause, that Lord Mount-Trevor had to wait till it had subsided. He then went on to introduce his esteemed friend to the company, preliminary to proposing his health, and did so in terms that demanded their respect as much as their attention. The Marquis certainly drew a good deal on his imagination for the portrait he attempted of "the architect of his colossal fortune—one of the men of the age who were the living proofs of the prosperity of the country—the merchant princes who were models of commercial enterprise, and who introduced sterling improvements while circulating wealth wherever they went," &c. &c.

Nevetheless, he used very little exaggeration, and when, after the speech had been warmly responded to by all present, the object of their host's eulogium continued considerably to increase their good opinion by entering into a short but lucid exposition of the obligations the nation owed to commerce, and the enlightened policy of the Government in reference to articles of production, the wisest of the politicians became satisfied that they had got an oracle amongst them on

whom they might rely with the fullest confidence.

When coffee was introduced, most of the county magnates left their seats to hold short but friendly confabulations with their new acquaintance, or arranged themselves into little private committees in which they discussed his merits. The Marquis went from one to the other, coffee-cup in hand, dropping confidential hints and pleasant jests in his most sociable manner. Lord Mount-Trevor was always in good humour, particularly with himself, and he was now specially gratified with the idea of having been able to bring forward the new man, whom, moreover, he had every reason to hope he could make useful.

Lord Cassington seemed equally well pleased. His lordship had left his seat to shake hands with his father's guest, who he concurred with his young friends, was a thorough good fellow. The Bishop was as gracious to him as if he had the two archbishoprics in his gift, even meditating the extraordinary step of sending him a presentation copy of his famous work on Hebrew points,

which nobody had seen. The county magnates were overflowing with patronage. They were unanimous in their estimate of Mr. Drelincourt's abilities, and seemed anxious to turn them to account.

All present were thorougly satisfied that the friend of their host was a remarkable man, whose acquaintance was well worth cultivating—all with two exceptions. Dr. Grauwacke was amazed that any man could venture to address an enlightened community without once mentioning Schleswig-Holstein; and Mr. Tintoretto Jones indignantly set the new man down as a humbug. He evidently knew nothing of high art! He had not the slightest idea of abusing the Royal Academy!

In this mood the party proceeded to join the ladies in the drawing-room.

CHAPTER XXIV.

DRAWING-ROOM COMPANY.

THE Marchioness of Mount-Trevor sat in one of those convenient round-about couches, usually found in fashionable saloons, that are as convenient for the active employment of the tongue as for rest of the body. This master-piece of French upholstery was shared by two other ladies, whose ample skirts nearly concealed the superb amber satin with which it was covered. They sat nearly *dos-à-dos* with their hostess, yet their heads were so conveniently placed on the right and left of her for conversation, that feminine confidence seemed a matter of course.

The stiff angular figure, surmounted by the

proud sharp visage on her right, was Bishop Crumpe's aristocratic wife. The youthful graceful form, with its peculiarly charming young face, on her left, belonged to the retired merchant's plebeian daughter and heiress. But no one with any knowledge of the subject, would have ventured to pronounce her plebeian, for her appearance was conspicuously more thoroughly high-bred than was that of the Earl's daughter.

Lady Mount-Trevor always dressed magnificently when she received company. Her ladyship wore the robe in which she attended the last Drawing Room, before she left town. It was a grand as well as tasteful combination of the richest Genoa velvet, and the most rare point lace, with diamond tiara, and ear-rings *en suite*. The dress became her well; indeed, as a lay figure, for the favourable disposal of feminine drapery and ornaments, there were very few ladies in the English Court, who could compete with the Marchioness.

Lady Dorothea Scrymgeour's black satin and bugles belonged to a more severe school of decoration, but then Lady Dorothea knew

that she was a bishop's wife, and that moderation in apparel would be expected from her. She, however, chose to make a compromise between her feminine inclinations and her episcopal predilections. She rejected gay colours, but the material she selected was always the most expensive that could be procured; and however rigidly she assumed to have her religious opinions direct from Heaven, she was at heart so completely one of the crowd in Vanity Fair, as to insist on having all her wardrobe from Paris.

Miss Drelincourt looked charming by contrast with her more imposing companions, her gown being of a very delicate tint, and the fabric of a fairy-like texture, trimmed with a lightness and grace that could only have been produced by a certain well-known town *modiste*, at whose door in Grosvenor Street it is said many carriage-horses are in the habit of stopping, without waiting to be pulled up. Her jewels were few, but her bouquet in its costly holder was a marvellous combination of rare exotics, such as no conservatory in the neighbourhood could have rivalled.

The ladies were not conversing, they were listening—each with a distinct and characteristic expression of face. The Marchioness with that statuesque repose of figure and Minerva-like dignity of countenance, for which she would have been as remarkable at a game of blind man's buff as during an earthquake —Lady Dorothea looking painfully rigid as if with the sense of being one of the Caryatidæ, whose shoulders have to bear the entire fabric of good society; the merchant's daughter, with unstudied grace and intelligence, breathing as it were from her every look and movement, gazed like the lady in Comus absorbed in the magic sound.

The source of their interest was a gentleman playing at the further end of the well-lighted richly-furnished apartment, on an improved harmonium, that had recently arrived from town. There was no mistaking that pale spiritual face, noble figure, and intellectual head. The performer was the Reverend Emanuel Mordecate.

There were several other ladies in the room, as well as Lord Clarence Leigh, who sat near his tutor, but all had equally surrendered

themselves to the charm of that skilful performance. It was wonderfully clever, exhibiting a talent that possessed as prominently the force of genius as the freshness of novelty.

It was a voluntary, but made up of reminiscences of the *chef-d'œuvres* of the greatest composers of various schools. Sometimes a burst of grand harmony was followed by a phrase of the tenderest melody; sometimes a skilful series of the most striking modulations introduced an air as marvellous for its sweetness as for its simplicity; and presently the grand *motivo* of a triumphant march preluded the touching wail of a funeral dirge.

The performer seemed equally familiar with every species of composition, from the most simple *aria* to the most intricate fugue, and equally intimate with every master from the quaint exercises of Scarlatti and Palestrina to the most scientific studies of Sebastian Bach, and Hummel. Now he impetuously burst forth with one of the grandest choruses of Handel, then lingered lovingly over a solemn *scherzo* by Mozart or Beethoven. Hardly had he done with the classical spirit which breathed

throughout the masterpieces of Glück and Winter, than he was as thoroughly master of the romance that prevailed in the more poetical productions of Mendelssohn and Schubert.

There was a marked feature in the performance though it seemed as many-hued as the prism—this was the constant recurrence to themes of a devotional character. However secular might be the associations connected with many of the compositions, the manner in which the performer dwelt on some of the finest examples of Church music used in the Romish service, showed that he played with a higher object than to amuse.

He succeeded perfectly, at least in two instances. His impressionable pupil dwelt on every tone, as if the reverential harmonies were flinging chain upon chain around his soul. And the scarcely less excitable merchant's daughter, continued to listen as though there existed a power in the symphony that had subjected her spirit to the most complete, though the most pleasant, subordination.

"What do you think of him, my dear?" inquired Lady Mount-Trevor, caressing the

ears of a very dimunitive toy terrier in her lap.

"Oh, the man's very well!" replied Lady Dorothea, carelessly.

Lady Dorothea never exhibited emotion. She could have listened to a street organ with as little sensibility. She did not think it becoming in a bishop's wife to be interested in the performances of musicians.

"Who is he?" her ladyship condescended to ask.

"He is Clarence's tutor."

"Oh!"

The Marchioness did not think it necessary to enlighten Dr. Crumpe's wife as to the real character and vocation of her *protégé;* and having indulged in an expressive interjection, the bishop's lady considered that she had said as much on the subject as could be expected from a person in her responsible position.

The feelings of Miss Drelincourt were far from being under such perfect control. To tell the exact truth, there was no reliable evidence likely to be forthcoming, that either of her neighbours possessed feelings. But the heiress had had a totally different education.

Her gratification in any intellectual pleasure was as intense as it was genuine. She knew not why, but the singing of her talented friend from the Grange had not affected her so deeply as did the playing to which she was intently listening.

At last the performer, concluding with a canon of an intensely devotional character, rose from his seat, and after interchanging a few friendly words with his delighted pupil, moved in the direction of his patroness. Very much to Lady Dorothea's astonishment, the Marchioness drew in her ample drapery, and even disturbed her lap-dog to uncover a vacant seat near her, on the circular couch.

The reverend gentleman need not have felt flattered by this attention. Her ladyship would have done as much for "the eminent tragedian," "the famous lion hunter," "the distinguished traveller in Central Asia," "the celebrated missionary," "the eloquent statesman;" indeed, she would have been quite as civil to a gorilla, had a live example of the species become in any degree an object of hero worship in the world of fashion.

"Alexandre has greatly improved the

Harmonium," he observed, as he accepted the proffered seat.

"Yes," replied his hostess.

The Marchioness never said too much. Perhaps her popularity with scientific men depended on the skilful way with which she economized her words.

"It is not to be compared to the Cathedral organ," observed the Bishop's wife, who never missed an opportunity of standing up for whatever ministered to sacerdotal dignity.

"Certainly not," said the gentleman, deferentially. "An organ of the finest construction is a marvellous instrument for effect when skilfully played. Persons of real judgment and of genuine taste, cannot avoid giving it the preference over every other musical instrument."

Dr. Crumpe's lady was in a slight degree mollified. She was not insensible to compliments on her judgment and taste.

"Should you give a concert in the diocese?" she said, condescendingly, "the Bishop, I have no doubt, would patronize you. Provided, of course, that the music selected for the occasion was of an orthodox character."

"A thousand thanks; your Ladyship is very good," replied the Reverend Emanuel Mordecate, with a smile that might have thawed the most icy reserve. "I am afraid that I am not likely to be distinguished by that estimable prelate; there being no probability of my giving a concert. I have not the slightest claim upon his lordship's patronage. I am only an amateur."

"You play very well, Mr. Mordecate," observed the Marchioness, who never forgot to commend every celebrity whom she patronized.

"Unquestionably!" added Lady Dorothea, who thought that she could not avoid endorsing the opinion of her hostess, particularly as the man was distinguished by a very gentlemanly address. She was obliged to acknowledge that he was far superior in that respect to the Bishop's chaplain. Miss Drelincourt did not say a word.

"Are you fond of music?" he inquired, turning to the heiress.

"Oh very!" she replied, with animation. "Especially such music as I have this evening had the good fortune to hear."

The performer looked pleased, Dr. Crumpe's lady displeased. "These forward chits," she thought, "are ready to flirt with any one."

"But, Lady Dorothea!" exclaimed the reverend gentleman, turning towards her in his most deferential manner, "you would afford me an inexpressible satisfaction if your ladyship would honour me so far as to suggest some favourite *maestro* whose genius has been so fortunate as to have excited your admiration."

"I'm very fond of Handel, Mr. Mordecate," replied that lady, quite mollified.

The gentleman immediately rose, made a bow to her—as courteous as it was gentlemanlike, and returned to the instrument.

"That's a superior man!" exclaimed Lady Dorothea in an oracular tone, and with a look of one having quite made up her mind on the subject.

"Yes," replied the Marchioness, languidly, playing with the ears of her lap-dog. Notwithstanding her ladyship's well-known partiality for geniuses, her partiality for "Tiney" was far more sincere.

The heiress looked fixedly on her bouquet,

but her thoughts were not on its precious buds and rare blossoms. She was considering her estimate of Mr. Mordecate. In her eyes he was the most remarkable man she had ever known. There seemed to be the same charm in his presence that existed in his playing.

Presently the harmonium gave forth one of the most touching of Handel's pious strains, "Waft her angels to the skies;" and if it had been sung by an angelic choir, it could scarcely have been more effective. At least, so thought Mr. Drelincourt's daughter,—a piece of plebeian extravagance which neither of her high-bred companions was likely to fall into.

The Bishop's wife was quite as much pleased as it was possible for a bishop's wife to be. She had not been insensible to the superior man's going back to the instrument for her special gratification; and his selecting that air, in her idea, was singularly respectful. It was quite proper that a bishop's wife should be wafted to the skies, though this was not necessary at present.

The Marchioness seemed to be quite as much gratified as either of her fair friends. The fine classic *contour* of her features never

looked more worthy of admiration—never appeared more aristocratic. But she did not hear a note of the music. She was calculating how soon she should be able to get away from these tiresome people; and speculating as to the probability of her again meeting at Baden that Russian Princess, Peterosnoffsky, who flirted so terribly with the Marquis last year, and won so much money from him at *lansquenet.*

As soon as he had completed the Handelian air, the clerical performer commenced another, which he played with the same exquisite feeling. And he continued his performance, always selecting the special favourites of Lady Dorothea, with a knowledge of her taste that very much surprised that lady, and so much gratified her that she could not help acknowledging to herself she had never before listened to any music with half the enjoyment. Mr. Mordecate was a very superior man; she should cultivate his acquaintance. He might suggest some improvements in the choral service of the cathedral.

Miss Drelincourt also felt an inclination to cultivate Mr. Mordecate's acquaintance. The

Handelian selection had increased the charm which his previous performance had produced, and her imagination had become excited by the train of tender emotions those sacred melodies had created. She would ask her father to invite him to the Hall. He would be, she felt certain, quite as agreeable a companion as her fascinating friend from the Grange—and much less dangerous. In the last part of this estimate she was in error.

"Marchioness," whispered the Bishop's wife, "is Mr. Mordecate in Orders?"

The question remained unanswered; the Marchioness was asleep. Her repose, however, was of very short duration. The gentlemen entered from the dining-room—laughing, talking loudly, and all in high spirits.

The hostess unclosed her eyelids, and was mistress of the situation in a moment. One glance told her that the performer was in earnest conversation with his pupil; that the county magnates had surrounded Mr. Drelincourt, and appeared to be engaged in a very interesting conference; and that the younger men had gathered about her daughter, who, with her governess, had been permitted to join the party.

Tea was presently served, and the attention of the Marchioness was pretty well monopolized by those among the most distinguished of her guests, who availed themselves of their privilege to saunter up to her, the elder ones for a little gossip, the younger for a good look at the heiress. A buzzing conversation was maintained, with the accompaniment of jingling spoons, and occasional little bursts of laughter.

Dr. Crumpe was standing apart, looking apparently at the Canalettis and Zucharellis and Watteaus, upon the walls—very gravely—indeed, exactly as a bishop should look at such vanities, and was about to put down his tea-cup, when it was nearly jerked out of his hand by a hearty slap on the back. He turned round hastily to see who had dared to take such a liberty with his sacred person, and his very wide open eyes fell upon the laughing face of a young lady—moreover, a very handsome young lady.

As it was the Bishop's first visit to Mount-Trevor Court, several of the company were strangers to him. He certainly, to the best

of his knowledge, had never before seen this audacious girl. He gave a furtive glance in the direction of the circular ottoman, from which he had been carefully keeping aloof since he had entered the drawing-room; but to his great relief observed that Lady Dorothea was deeply engaged with a particularly handsome and distinguished looking man, who stood before her sipping his tea, and talking with apparent earnestness.

"What odds will you lay against the favourite, at next week's races?" demanded the audacious young lady.

The Bishop looked thunderstruck.

"The odds are seven to three against my brother Cass's chesnut colt, 'Highflyer.' I'll take your bet in ponies."

The Bishop looked horrified.

"Come old fellow, you needn't be so slow. I know that you can make a book as well as any member of the Jockey Club."

"Make a book!" Could she have heard of his work on the Hebrew points? But, "Jockey Club!" He stared at her in a dreadful state of bewilderment.

"Do you know who I am?" he inquired, in a solemn whisper.

"And no mistake!" she replied, her handsome face radiant with smiles. "Cass will tell you that I'm up to everything, and down at nothing. If you ain't game for a bet, when you go to my brother's room I'll toss you for half-crowns. Best two out of three, or sudden death."

"Are you Lady Augusta Leigh?" muttered the frightened prelate, who had evidently heard something of this *enfant terrible.*

"Of course I am; and you are the Bishop of Bond Street—the man who recovers stolen dogs, you know."

"An amateur policeman, to hunt up dog-stealers! What a horrible degradation," thought Dr. Crumpe.

"Charley Forrester told me so; and said you'd bet with me on the steeple chase, or on anything else.

"My dear Lady Augusta!" exclaimed Dr. Crumpe, making a desperate effort to recover both his breath and his dignity. "You have been most shamefully deceived. I am the Lord Bishop of this diocese."

"I've been awfully sold!" cried her ladyship, in a subdued voice.

"Sir Charles Forrester has taken a very great liberty with me, and I shall bring his offence before a proper tribunal."

"Don't be hard upon Charley!" cried the young lady, putting up both her hands with a very pleading expression of countenance. "He didn't mean any harm. It was only the poor boy's chaff, said in the way of joke. I dare say he didn't think I should be so foolish as to believe him. It's all my fault. Please to forgive Charley, and I'll never offend you again."

The penitent expression of that innocent young face, was more than the good Bishop's heart could bear.

"Well, well, I won't take any proceedings. But tell him to come to the palace. I must really give the young man a lecture. He has been most grossly insulting the Church in my person."

"Then he'll say I've got him into a row!" cried the young lady, in a tone of vexation. "Now I'm quite sure you're very amiable," she added coaxingly, "and a good deal above taking notice of that poor boy's chaffing—so forget and forgive, there's a dear good Bishop."

The Right Reverend Dr. Crumpe took another hurried glance at the circular seat, and observing that the dreaded eyes were still raised to the face of the distinguished looking man, he grasped the hands of the pleading penitent in his, and gazed on her charming smiling countenance.

"I won't say a word about it to anybody," he murmured.

"Not to mamma."

"Not even to Lady Dorothea Scrymgeour!" he added, in his most solemn tones.

She glanced at him gratefully—with an expression he never forgot,—and, rapidly raising one of his hands to her lips, dropped him a graceful curtsey, and hurried into the adjoining room.

As soon as Mr. Drelincourt could get free of the somewhat pertinacious attentions of his now cordial allies, Sir Pouncefort Pouncefort, the Hon. Major-General Toplofty, and Admiral Lord Bluffington, he remembered that the Marquis had suggested to him the advantage of gaining the good opinion of the Lady Dorothea Scrymgeour, and therefore

looked out for that influential member of the county magnates.

Presently he observed a tall lady in black satin and bugles, with a stern expression of face, which he thought he recognized as the one that had so earnestly scrutinized his end of the dinner-table; and, promptly advancing in that direction, boldly seated himself in an empty chair close to her own.

"Permit me to express my surprise," said the retired merchant deferentially, "at finding a lady of your social influence sitting in this out-of-the-way corner, so completely alone. Perhaps the trifling talk of the idlers in society is not quite to the taste of a mind so thoroughly religious and intellectual, and you have escaped from it?"

"Perhaps it don't convene," replied the other, with something very like a spiteful look.

The ruling idea of Mr. Drelincourt was that Lady Dorothea was a strong-minded woman, of the usual independent way of thinking and acting. The answer he received did not at all enlighten him.

"Be this as it may," he added, with a

smile, "your ladyship cannot expect to remain in the undisturbed enjoyment of your solitude. I for one appreciate such qualities as I have heard you possess, too highly to consent to anything that looks so like neglect of your worth."

"I guess you'd better mind your own business," was the ungrateful answer, as the tall figure sat very stifly upright, and the sharp visage looked a shade sterner than usual. The lady in black satin and bugles was not the lady of Dr. Crumpe, and she suspected that the stranger by whom she had been addressed was trying to amuse himself at her expense.

"No one neglects me that I know of," she added disdainfully; "and I shouldn't be at all riled if anybody did."

Mr. Drelincourt felt that he was not getting on so well with the Bishop's lady as he had with the Bishop, but then he remembered something his host had hinted about her being a nuisance. He thought it better to break fresh ground.

"Is your ladyship interested in the latest news from America?" he inquired.

The lady gave him a withering glance.

"It seems as if those precious Yankees were getting a proper reward for their bounce and filibustering. I should not be at all surprised if the Federals had to knock under in the end, amid the contempt and derision of Europe."

"Stranger," cried the lady in black satin and bugles, starting up, her grey eyes flashing indignation, "you're an almighty fool!"

She drew her voluminous skirts round her as if to avoid contact with the audacious Britisher, and swept past him as though she regarded the man, as well as his observations, with supreme contempt.

"Curious manners for a bishop's lady," he said to himself.

"My dear fellow," cried the Marquis coming up to him with his most pleasant look, "why don't you pay your respects to Lady Dorothea Scrymgeour? She's sitting with my wife yonder."

"Bless my heart!" exclaimed his guest, with an aspect of dismay, "I thought I had been conversing with her ladyship. I took her for that tall lady in black going into the next room."

Lord Mount-Trevor laughed heartily. "My dear Drelincourt, how could you make such a mistake? That's my daughter's governess."

His lordship perpetrated a comical grimace, and then whispered confidentially into his friend's ear,—

"My lady does not approve of handsome governesses—out of regard for her sons—perhaps out of regard for her husband also; and so she goes to the other extreme."

Lord Mount-Trevor made another grimace.

"Pray don't say anything to Lady Dorothea about this case of mistaken identity," he added. "She wouldn't forgive you in a hurry. But come along, my dear fellow, *I'll* introduce you."

Mr. Drelincourt readily accompanied his obliging host, was received by the Bishop's wife most favourably, in consequence of the highly imaginative recommendation he obtained at his introduction, and was shortly in close confabulation with that powerful member of the county aristocracy on those good works that were most patronized in the diocese.

In a distant corner of the room stood two

singular-looking men in earnest conversation. It was impossible to mistake them.

They were Mr. Tintoretto Jones, and Professor Grauwacke. As they had been unable to find any one to talk to them, a mutual necessity had brought them to talk to each other. A small specimen of their conversation will suffice.

"Now, Professor, you're a man of science, and therefore a person of consideration in your own country."

The palæontologist cheerfully agreed with this statement, though he could have confessed that when in Berlin he had not been so much looked up to as he felt he deserved to be.

"Doesn't it strike you as humiliating in the lowest degree," added the pre-Raphaelite, "as degrading intellect to the most contemptible position, as placing art in the most miserable condition, to realize such a spectacle as this——"

The German *savant* looked through his coloured spectacles inquiringly into the face of his new English friend. Mr. Tintoretto Jones spoke low, but he felt deeply.

"You see the artificial advantages of rank.

You see them flourishing luxuriantly in our institutions. We are intensely aristocratic, my dear sir—intensely aristocratic. In another direction you see the equally artificial advantages of wealth. You see them flourishing to a similar extent. We are a nation of shopkeepers, cotton-lords, and money-grubbers in countless variety."

The geologist took a pinch of snuff.

"Now, look on real aristocracy—on genuine riches," said the artist. "Observe science in your own person, overlooked as though no one felt the slighest interest in such pursuits. Observe art in mine, just as little thought of as though my great picture of the 'Wise and Foolish Virgins,' so scandalously hung in the octagon-room, had never been painted, and as though that tyrannical oligarchy in Trafalgar Square had never existed, and as though so exalted a profession as that of high art had——"

"Mine goot friend," observed the Professor, seizing the orator by the button, his sharp eyes flashing through his spectacles, "I do not gomplain of noting. I have reason to pelieve I shall have someting to do in dis

place that shall prove science is not so mosh neglect as you imagine."

Mr. Tintoretto Jones looked curious. His small nose suddenly assumed quite an inquisitive aspect.

"As for yourself, mine goot friend," he added, in a sympathizing tone, "I am afraid your style is not sufficiently realistic for the age in which we live."

Mr. Tintoretto Jones looked offended.

"High art is doubtless an exalted pursuit, but it demands the highest attainments to succeed in it. You cannot be idealistic with small ideas. You should go to Germany and study Cornelius, mine goot friend, and then perhaps der Royal Academy shall hang your pictures more betterer."

Mr. Tintoretto Jones looked savage. He at once turned on his heel.

"That fellow's a quack!" he muttered between his teeth, as he moved away.

"The Herr Kuntsler Jones is one hombog!" said the Professor to himself, taking another pinch of snuff. "But I must get introduce to the rich man on whose estate I have found traces of minerals. Aha! Herr Professor,

you shall have many thousand thalers out of dis! Dese English peoples pay well for what promise to bring money, but it is strange to me they have nothing to say about Schleswig-Holstein."

The Professor now looked out for Mr. Drelincourt, but that gentleman was seen so completely taken possession of by Lady Dorothea Scrymgeour, that he was obliged to defer his communication to a more favourable opportunity.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE SICK LION.

"It's horrible to use a fellow in this atrocious way," exclaimed Lord Vallance, as that pattern of nobility sat upright in his bed, looking unmistakeably ill—unmistakeably very ill. His bald head and hairless face, for his lordship had by direction of the physician been divested of his fine head of hair, and pendent whiskers, made him look anything but prepossessing. It was an easy operation, for both hair and whiskers came off on being lifted, and a cadaverous visage of a yellow tinge, resembling that of a corpse in the moonlight, was all that now presented itself to the observer. It was painfully evident

that the sick lion was very sick indeed.

"If I wasn't so awfully seedy," he continued in an irritated voice, "I'd be quit of you all in less than no time. It's a shame to bully a fellow when he's so awfully seedy. Yet the doctor comes and bullies me in the most dreadful way. And when I'm quit of him the parson comes and bullies me a deuced deal worse; and now both are gone, you two horrid hags, you antediluvian kangaroos—you superannuated hippopotamuses—you bully me worse than the doctor and the parson put together. By George you do, and I won't stand it!"

"If you please, my Lord," murmured the quiet voice of Sister Dorcas, looking benevolently through her large spectacles, "I only want your lordship to take a little of this nice broth."

"Yes, my Lord," added sister Charity, coming up cautiously a little way in the rear, "we only want your lordship to take the mutton broth the doctor ordered for you. It will do your lordship a power of good!"

"It shan't do my lordship any good! I won't take it! I will have ortolans and

champagne! You haven't left me so much as a thing to throw at you, you spiteful old hags! I sent the last book at your heads yesterday, and my only pair of slippers last night. It's hard lines for a fellow not to have so much as a boot-jack to send after such atrocious plagues and torments and nuisances as you, you two abominable old tiger-cats!"

"If you please, my Lord, the boot-jack's gone to be mended," said Sister Dorcas, meekly. "It was split when your lordship sent it down-stairs after us, only three days ago; and we haven't another in the house, if you please, my Lord."

"No, my Lord, we haven't another boot-jack, or I'm sure it would be quite at your lordship's service," added Sister Charity, quite as insinuatingly.

"You dreadful old shark!"

"There's nothing we'd mind doing if your lordship would only be so very obliging as to get well!" exclaimed Sister Dorcas.

"You atrocious old vulture!"

"We don't mind your shying things at us a bit, my Lord," said Sister Charity, ap-

proaching however as if looking out for a missile, "for goodness knows your lordship don't seem a great hand at flinging. But it's a pity to smash the Windsor soap against the wall, and send a pot of good pomade through the windy."

"If I could but reach my dressing case or my carpet-bag, I'd pound you into dust!"

The sick man made a spring as if to obtain the things that had been put out of his way, and the sisters retreated hurriedly, much to the disarrangement of the hot fluid carried by the elder. The younger fled indulging in a scream.

"What's all this disturbance about?" cried a strong voice, and at the same moment the sturdy figure of Miss Lætitia Fairholme, in a dark bonnet and black cloak, entered the room.

"By Jove, here's another of 'em come to bully me!" cried Lord Vallance. It's a horrid shame when a fellow's so awfully seedy!"

"What are you making this discreditable uproar about, you foolish man?" demanded Miss Lætitia, with the look and manner of a

strong-minded female under trying circumstances.

"Oh, ma'am!" whispered Sister Charity, "Doctor Dallas gave strict injunctions that no one was to irritate the patient."

"Irritate a fiddle-stick!" exclaimed the Curate's sister, contemptuously, walking up to the bedside with her eyes fixed upon those of the invalid. "What's the difficulty?"

"His lordship won't take his broth, ma'am, what I've prepared specially for him," replied Sister Dorcas, "and insists on our bringing him things the doctor says he ain't to be permitted to have."

"O! he does, does he?" said Miss Lætitia, as if she thought it something of a joke. "I'll settle that matter with him in a very little time."

"Now, Lord Vallance," she added, addressing the sick man, determinedly, "I know all about you, so it's not the least use playing any of these tricks with me. Take the broth, directly!'

"It's horrid—it's atrocious—it's abominable!"

"Take the broth, Lord Vallance!"

"To bully a fellow in this inhuman cold-blooded way——"

"Take the broth, I say!"

"When I'm so awfully seedy?"

"Will you take the broth when I tell you?"

"Miss Lætitia never raised her gaze from the blood-shot eyes of the cadaverous face before her. She seized the basin out of the hand of Dorcas, and placed it and its contents close to the patient's chin.

"By Jove, it's atro——"

"TAKE IT!" shouted the strong-minded woman, as the sick lion began a whining protest. He cast one frightened look at her, and took up the spoon. He tasted the broth, and seemed half inclined to refuse it; but another glance at the terribly stern eyes fixed upon him, completed his submission.

The two attendants regarded the scene with undisguised amazement. It certainly was a remarkable one. Lord Valance swallowed the savoury liquid, obviously under compulsion; every now and then raising a nervous glance from the basin to the inexorable face above him, and then, with the impulse of fright, gulping down the broth as fast as he could.

"Now, let me see no more of such highly improper conduct!" exclaimed the Curate's sister, as she watched the disappearance of the last spoonful. "I am come here, Lord Vallance, for no other purpose than to watch over your recovery; and I don't leave the Grange till I am satisfied that you are out of danger."

The aristocratic invalid opened his mouth, at this intimation, with an expression of imbecile surprise.

"I am not at all the sort of person to allow of any tricks being played in my presence; so you had better mind what you are about, I can tell you."

The patient stared in abject fear.

"Lie down and go to sleep," she added, sharply.

Hardly were the words out of her mouth, when the sick lion flung himself down, and, drawing the bed-clothes over his shoulders, shut his eyes. Presently, he half-opened one; but seeing the terrible stern look still fixed upon him, he gave in, without the slightest attempt at either opposition or evasion. In a few minutes his regular breathing, sounding

unnaturally hard, announced that he was in a profound sleep.

"Take my bonnet and cloak, Dorcas."

"Yes, Ma'am."

"I shall remain here for the present."

"Yes, Ma'am."

Dorcas was too astonished to say anything more. She took Miss Lætitia's things, and left the room, to put them carefully away. Charity was too astonished to say a word. She seized upon the basin and spoon and followed her sister.

Miss Fairholme sat down by the side of the bed, drew some work out of her pocket, and was presently as quietly engaged with her crochet as if she were in the parlour of the parsonage. She seemed thoroughly at home in an instant. This highly respectable spinster—this model strong-minded woman, alone in the bed-room of a strange man, and he one of the most licentious reprobates that disgraced the age; and, moreover, he suffering under a severe attack of typhoid fever!

All she thought of was—first, that the bad man was a sinner whose soul might be saved; secondly, that he was in great danger, and

might, with careful watching, recover; lastly, that he was a fellow-creature, and that, as a Christian, she was bound to run all risks to give him a chance of turning to a better life.

So she worked on, tranquil and self-possessed, in that unwholesome chamber, only leaving her post and interrupting her work to put things a little in order in the room, to open the window to obtain something like ventilation, and to perform several other little offices which had no other object in view than the comfort of her worthless charge.

Presently she discovered a bottle of medicine, and read the directions on the label; she saw at once that it ought to have been taken long before, and could easily understand why the cork had not been disturbed. She removed a small table between her chair and the bed, placed the bottle on it with a glass, ready for use, carefully scrutinized the face of the sleeper, and again resumed her crochet.

Lord Vallance was restless, and in about half an hour opened his eyes with a half-dreamy, half-apprehensive expression on his cadaverous features.

"Which of those atrocious wretches has dared to open my window?" he demanded, in a querulous voice.

"It was not done by either of those respectable females," was replied in clear and firm tones.

The sick lion turned his glance, and started when he observed the speaker. She continued her work as though she felt herself mistress of the situation.

"Who then had the monstrous audacity to open my window, without my permission?" he asked, affecting as much indignation as independence.

"I did," was the brief answer.

"Well, I never was so bullied before in my life," exclaimed Lord Vallance, opening his dull eyes very wide. "It's the most cruel and abominably cold-blooded thing, when a fellow's so awfully seedy."

"You ought to have taken your medicine at least four-and-twenty hours ago," was all the reply he received, as Miss Lætitia, putting down her work, shook the bottle, and then deliberately poured part of the contents into the glass.

"I won't take any physic," roared the sick lion, trying to look determined. "I never could take physic! I detest such horrid stuff! I won't swallow a drop—so you'd better throw it out of the window."

"I shall do nothing of the kind, Lord Vallance," said his visitor, rising and bringing the glass in her hand to the bed-side. "The doctor has sent it for you, and I insist upon you taking it in accordance with his directions."

"But I never could take physic, ma'am!"

"Then it's high time you should begin."

"It's the nastiest, filthiest, abominablest——"

"It's to do you good."

"But I don't want such trash to do me good. I want orlotans and champagne, or a little maraschino and a Bologna-sausage."

"Such things are not to be had here—and would be very dangerous for your lordship to partake of in your present state, even if they could be procured."

"I never was better in my life, ma'am. I could eat no end of Bologna-sausage."

"Yon will have the goodness to take this

instead," and she held out the glass to him, fixing a look upon his dim eyes that evidently made him quail.

"To bully a fellow like this, when he's so awfully seedy!"

The querulous complaint was stopped by the rim of the wine-glass coming against his livid lips. With a look of despair the sick lion opened his mouth, the medicine was poured in; he gulped it down his throat with a convulsive effort, and then his head sunk back upon his pillow, and he stared at his attendant with the frightened look of one who has been forced to take poison.

Miss Lætitia placed the glass upon the table, resumed her seat, and returned to her crochet, looking as unconcerned as though about her ordinary occupations. Lord Vallance watched her industrious fingers till he again closed his eyes. Presently he gave evidence of being again asleep.

Footsteps on the staircase caused the watcher to look up, and she saw Dr. Dallas enter the room. He seemed surprised at the presence of the lady, but was too experienced a practitioner to make any observation. Per-

haps he knew the strong minded woman too well to think any remark necessary.

He examined the patient's face and felt his pulse without disturbing him; then came to the other side of the bed, and took up the bottle of medicine.

"A good thing for him that he has had one dose!" he observed. "You must repeat it regularly."

"I mean so, Doctor," was the sharp reply.

"Broth and arrow-root only, Miss Lætitia."

"Rest assured that he shall have nothing else."

"Perhaps we may pull him through," said the physician dubiously. "But I think it would be prudent for him to settle his worldly affairs at once, and as speedily get such spiritual aid as may fit him for a better world."

"Everything shall be done for him, Doctor, and without loss of time," replied the Curate's sister, quietly.

"It is my duty to let you know that these fevers are contagious under predisposing circumstances, Miss Lætitia."

"It is *my* duty to stay here, Doctor."

The doctor shook hands with the lady-nurse, without attempting to argue the matter with her. He had no misgivings. He had met her before under circumstances of greater risk, and she had come to no harm. The confidence he knew that she had in the faith she professed was almost equalled by her feeling of self-reliance. He went away, promising to repeat his visit the following morning.

The sleep of Lord Vallance this time lasted several hours, but when he awoke, there were the same fingers at work as busily as when the monotonous movements caused him to close his eyes. Whether the calm repose which he had, tranquillized his irritability, or the lesson he had received of his strange nurse's strong-mindedness, had taught him docility, he appeared to wake in a different mood.

He accepted whatever sustenance was prepared for him without the slightest attempt at opposition. Even the abhorred physic was silently swallowed whenever Miss Lætitia thought the proper time had come for its administration—moreover, he never attempted

to abuse the two old women, against whom he had previously displayed such a terrible aversion. In short, the sick lion was in all these respects altered for the better.

When they were again alone, his nurse thought she had better act upon a suggestion she had received from Dr. Dallas. Without interrupting her work, she began a conversation.

"What friends have you, Lord Vallance?" she inquired.

At any other time his lordship would have heartily confounded her impudence, and held his tongue. But now he was so amiably disposed, that he considered the question the most proper in the world to put to him. He seemed charmed with it.

"They're a good deal too numerous to mention, ma'am," he replied, with a ghastly smile. "I've had no end of friends, everywhere."

"Had'nt you better write to one of them?"

"What about, ma'am?"

"About your condition, my Lord. I must no longer conceal from your lordship, that it is considered to be critical."

"That I ain't likely to recover, do you mean, ma'am?"

"Precisely."

"The friends I have, wouldn't trouble themselves much on that account, ma'am, so there can't be the slightest occasion for my writing to them, even supposing I could write, which I don't think I can."

"It is considered highly desirable that your Lordship should consult some confidential person as to the arrangement of your affairs."

"I'm afraid they're past arranging, ma'am. They were always in a state of the greatest possible disarrangement ever since I can remember. All the confidential persons who could be met with anywhere and everywhere would give it up as a bad job, ma'am. An arrangement is out of the question. It isn't possible."

"There is one thing, however, Lord Vallance, in which an arrangement must be made, and at once."

"I'm quite at your service, ma'am."

"The arrangement of your spiritual affairs, is imperative. You cannot put that off, Lord

Vallance. For all you know to the contrary, you may be called to a strict account of your past life before the morning—summoned to the dread tribunal to answer for your transgressions, before you have had an opportunity of evincing your repentance. The time is pressing; I charge you to take advantage of the opportunity, or it will be lost, and your last chance of Heaven be forfeited for ever."

"I'm afraid my chance there is but small, ma'am. Indeed, I have long given up all hope of scoring any winnings there."

"There is hope for the worst sinner, Lord Vallance."

"That must be a comfort to some, ma'am, when the game's ended; but I don't fancy somehow throwing up the cards at present. There's been a run of luck against me, to be sure, but luck often turns, and those who double on *rouge* sometimes get a haul which sets them up again."

The Curate's sister was indignant, but she was also charitable. The sick lion was a bad man she well knew, but then he was scarcely responsible for what he said.

"The immortal soul is too precious a stake to be played for lightly," she observed. "Indeed, I think it terrible to mention gambling transactions in connection with it in any way."

"Certainly, ma'am. But *rouge et noir* is a very pleasant game to play at, especially when you can break the bank."

"I don't know anything about it, Lord Vallance, and I must say that if you would think less about breaking banks, and more about your salvation your real gain would be greater."

"I don't know what the winnings might be in the last case, ma'am; but when that lucky Frenchman broke the bank at Homburg he bagged a matter of twenty thousand pounds."

Miss Lætitia felt her patience very much tried. She remained silent a few minutes.

"It is high time, Lord Vallance," she began again, "that you should think of the awful punishment which awaits the impenitent. Those who harden their hearts in the pursuit of worldly pleasures, so that the spirit of contrition cannot enter them, are heaping coals

of fire upon their heads that shall consume them utterly. Repent then, miserable sinner! while repentance is possible."

"I'm ready to do anything you recommend, ma'am. Only, if it's not asking too great a favour, I should like Lady Vallance to know that——"

Miss Lætitia waited for the communication, but it never was expressed. Whatever may have been the sick man's intention, he did not think it proper to give it utterance.

The Curate's sister knew a good deal about Lady Vallance, and did not hold her in very high estimation, more particularly on account of the scandal which had been brought on her brother by his travelling with her to town; nevertheless, she was quite ready to do her a service if it lay in her power.

"What were you saying about Lady Vallance?" she inquired.

"Oh, nothing particular, ma'am. I should like to have been reconciled to her, that's all."

"I do not know her address; nor do I think any good would result from my endeavours to make peace between you. But you shall have my good offices, should Lady

Vallance be willing to accept my mediation."

The sick lion seemed content with this assurance, and turned his head round as if intending to go to sleep. His nurse thought it best not to press him more with religious advice at present. It was clear to her that he was not in a proper frame of mind to receive spiritual exhortation. She, therefore, deferred a further attempt till the following day.

The next morning the doctor found the patient so much better that he pronounced him in a fair way of recovery; and Miss Lætitia having been summoned home on urgent business, Lord Vallance failed to receive the priceless benefits she had designed him. She left strict injunctions to his two attendants respecting his regimen, which they promised to regard with the greatest attention; and, as the sick lion not only left off showering missiles at their defenceless old heads, but epithets equally hard to endure, there was every reason to believe that he would be carefully attended to up to the period of his convalescence.

END OF VOL. II.